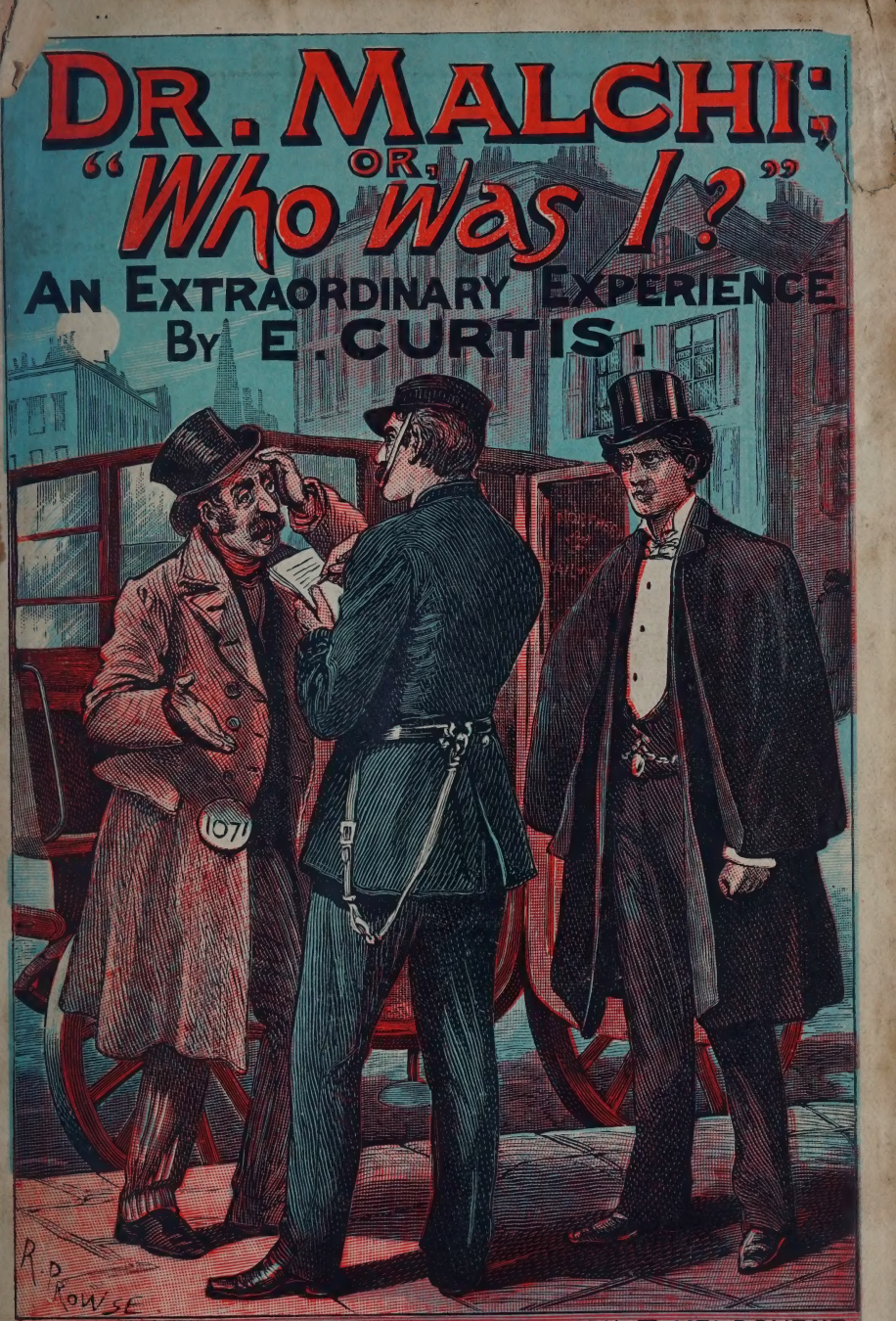
DR. MALCHI:

OR, "Who was I?"

AN EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE

By E. CURTIS.



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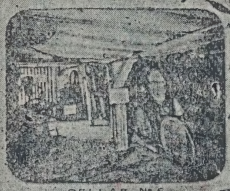

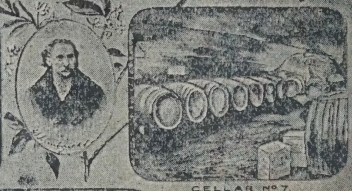

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DR. MALCHI

OR,

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BY

E. CURTIS,

AUTHOR OF

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DR. MALCHI;

OR

WHO WAS I?

INTRODUCTION.

THE experience I am about to relate is, I suppose, one of the most extraordinary that ever befell mortal man—nay, I am almost tempted to go farther, and boldly avow that, in mystery and originality, it doubtless surpasses all other extraordinary experiences. The difficulty of relating it in such a manner as to convey to the reader anything like an adequate impression of it besets me, even before the ink in which I have traced the first words of this introduction is dry. How can I make clear to sceptical or (possibly) prejudiced minds what I can but dimly comprehend myself?

> "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in our philosophy,"

says *Hamlet*. The quotation is a hackneyed one; but unless the reader who scans these prefatory observations will at once acknowledge its truth, he or she, as the case may be, is advised to read no farther.

I must confess that the difficulties which menace my remarkable narration are as formidable as numerous. Perhaps the one which has power to move me most is the fear lest my object in making it public should be misunderstood. I am neither a sensationalist nor literary charlatan, neither have I the faintest desire to pander to the love for the mysterious which is more or less innate in every human breast. I care but little whether, after my story is read, it is credited or not. I shall have fulfilled my duty. I shall

have given to the world the details of an experience which, I again assert, has, to the best of my belief, no parallel. There is, I frankly own, much in it that calls for explanation, and much that at first sight may seem mystical and unfinished, but I cannot (and would not if I could) deviate from my original determination, viz., to write down, as simply as possible, the following wonderful narration.

CHAPTER I.

MY AWAKENING.

I AWOKE out of a sound and dreamless slumber. For some moments afterwards my mind, as is often the case with newly-awakened sleepers, hovered between the borderland of oblivion and consciousness. Presently, as my reasoning powers grew stronger, I opened my eyes, still somewhat sleepily, and regarded with lazy attention a stray sunbeam lying athwart the white coverlet. I do not know how many moments elapsed before a curious sensation—mark you well that word—slowly made itself felt in my quickening mind. The sensation was as disagreeable as curious. To get rid of it, I closed my eyes again, and vainly strove to forget it. It became, however, more asserting and more pertinent. With swift-growing impatience, I strove to analyse it, and, succeeding in the abstract, failed in the main; or, in other words, I discovered that the curious sensation had its origin in a far more curious, because totally unknown, source.

I daresay many people, in their waking moments, have experienced a singular lapse of memory concerning some trivial, or sometimes an important, past event in their lives. Slumber has temporarily effaced the event from their memories, but the consciousness that such and such a lapse of memory has been committed is invariably present, and the awakening mind cannot rest until it has recalled it. Take, for instance, a great sorrow or a great joy which has un-

expectedly occurred in the life of any ordinary man or woman The person awakes the morning after the event, and, in the case of it being a sorrowful one, feels a strange mental depression and sense of unhappiness before the recollection of the sorrow itself has manifested itself to the memory; and in the case of an unexpected joy, or forthcoming pleasure, the newly-aroused sleeper feels an unwonted buoyancy of spirits, and a consciousness of happiness, while the quickened mind is travelling backwards to the source.

My own sensation, which I am endeavouring to describe, was similar to those quoted, only in the complete and concious loss of memory. I experienced neither any remarkable buoyancy of spirits nor mental depression. I had simply and entirely lost all *my personal recollections.* The ludicrousness of my position appealed irresistibly to my sense of humour, and I smiled broadly to myself as I waited for the tide of memory to turn.

The watch over my head ticked away another five minutes, and then I sprang up in bed and tried to laugh at my dilemma. My laugh died suddenly away. My lapse of memory each second caused me more annoyance. I could not have told, even to have saved my life, what the day of the month or the week was. I applied several (laughable, I think them now) tests to my memory. What did I have for dinner yesterday? Could indigestion possibly be to blame for my extraordinary forgetfulness? I could not remember partaking of any food, either on the yesterday, or any other day of my life.

"Pooh, pooh, that is nothing," I cried aloud. "Thousands of diners cannot remember what they have recently eaten. Let me think instead of how I spent yesterday. Come now. Where did I go? What did I do?"

Memory failed to answer me. With increasing alarm I strove to force myself to recollect, but my fruitless endeavours recoiled on myself. Questions only presented themselves to my perplexed mind; questions to which I could give no answers.

I tried to think of impersonal matters, and in so doing I recovered the calmness which I intuitively felt rather than knew belonged to me. Queen Victoria was the Sovereign to whom I yielded humble allegiance. The Marquess of Salisbury

was Prime Minister of England. Mr. Gladstone had recently delivered himself of the longest speech on record.

I heaved a deep sigh of relief, and then—I chanced for the first time to glance round the room in which I had lately enjoyed so profound a slumber.

All was unfamiliar and totally unrecognisable to me. Beads of perspiration slowly gathered on my forehead, and a strange faintness, averted only by a strong effort of will, menaced me.

Parting aside the silken curtains of the bed, I eagerly and curiously surveyed my surroundings. All the ordinary and comfortable fittings of a bed-chamber met my eyes; tables, chairs, upholsteries, were of a substantial, almost luxurious, character; but their very lack of friendly attributes terrified me. I knew them not. To the best of my belief I had never beheld the room or the room's furniture before.

"I must be dreaming," I muttered to myself, pressing my hands over my eyes; "I shall awake presently from a remarkable nightmare."

The sound of my own voice reassured me. I took courage after a moment or two, and looked up almost expecting by that time to find that the room had lost its utterly unfamiliar aspect. I was disappointed; the prosaic furniture remained unchanged, its very substantiality seemed to render the idea of its indulging in transformation feats of any kind extremely unlikely. The brass handles of the wardrobe blinked in the sunshine, and the white curtains at the window swayed gently to and fro in the morning breeze.

A sweet perfume was suddenly wafted to my nostrils. I turned my head and noticed an exquisite half-blown white rose in a tall and slender Bohemian vase on a small table near my left hand. I gazed again and again at it. Who had placed it there? Had I myself? What gentle association was connected with it? I shook my head in total inability to solve these conundrums, and then, sharply drawing the curtain, I shut out the sight of the rose, and strove with a prodigious effort of will to awake from the paralysing nightmare.

I failed dismally. The truth was slowly forcing itself upon me, but I fought it furiously back. I would not acknowledge, even to myself, that I had awoke from my strange slumber, entirely ignorant of my own identity.

I sprang out of the bed and paced the room. Who was I? Whence had I come? Whither was I going? Great heaven! had ever sane man asked himself such questions before? Ah! was I sane? I stopped short in my hurried pacing, appalled at the only solution of my terrible awakening that presented itself to me. Madmen, I had read once (I could remember book and author, but not any other connective circumstances), had no remembrance of past events. Ergo, I was mad. Stop, I would further test my memory before I accepted so dread an ultimatum.

With a trembling voice I recited several famous soliloquies culled from various authors. I seized a pencil and sheet of paper which haply lay near me, and easily translated from memory a goodly portion of Sophocles' Αντιγόνη. I solved difficult mathematical problems. I worked out several intricate calculations, and only when fully assured that my singular loss of memory had not affected my intellectual powers did I lay down the pencil and endeavour to realise my position.

I had forgotten my own name, personality, manner of past life, all former associations, friends; everything, in short, with which I once must have been individually connected. I was not mad. My head was clear, my thinking powers unclouded. Save for my reasoning and intellectual abilities, I might have been just born into the world, so utterly oblivious was I of all that had happened to me. Was ever man placed in such a predicament before? I groaned, as, seating myself at the little table beside the bed, I despairingly attempted to think out the cure for my novel disease. If only I had possessed the slightest clue—if only my own name had been whispered into my ear, the flood-gates of memory would, I felt assured, at once surrender. I had verily drank of the waters of Lethe—but how? when? where?

"I will be calm and composed," I determinedly declared. "I will, at least, remember my own name, even if I have to wrestle it letter by letter from the alphabet."

Greatly comforted by my resolution, I repeated aloud as many masculine Christian names commencing with A as I could possibly remember, and only after I had exhausted my tolerably long list did I begin at B, and so on to C. My task necessarily occupied some considerable time, and, when

completed, found me no nearer discovering my own name than I had been before I had run the alphabetical gamut. Once or twice indeed I had halted somewhat hopefully over a particular letter, but as that letter invariably chanced to be of the Y or Z order, I was consequently offered but a limited selection of names to choose from, and none of them, on close consideration, seemed exactly desirable cognomens.

"What in the world shall I do, I thought, hopelessly, when, cheque-book in hand, I find myself still mentally searching for my lost name?

Stop! that question suggested a legion of other questions. Had I a cheque-book, or, more important still, a banking account? Was I a rich or a poor man? Was I young or old? handsome or ugly? I debated these important questions with indescribable anxiety. A thought suddenly struck me. I could at least solve the two last. I strode to the cheval glass, and with bated breath surveyed myself.

Was the reflection thus presented to me really my own? I gazed again and again at it. My memory was not in the slightest degree resuscitated by it. I might have been, for aught it recalled to me, looking on the face and form of a complete stranger. Let me describe, as well as I can, the reflection in the cheval glass.

I saw a tall young man, clad in a silken-lined dressing-gown; he was well built, but something about his general appearance betokened either recent indisposition or else the delicacy which is alone produced by much studious confinement. I dwelt upon the regularity of his features and the refinement of expression with much pleasure. Certainly, just now, alarm and unmixed amazement were depicted to no small extent upon his countenance, but under less extraordinary circumstances and a gentler play of emotions, it would, I felt assured, be deemed an extremely interesting one.

"I am both young and handsome," I murmured with a sigh of relief, as I sank again into my chair. But my contentment did not last long; I had only been enabled to answer the least important of my questions. My own identity was as far from being established as ever.

"Who was I?" The perplexing query seemed stamped in letters of fire upon my brain. It was ludicrous no longer —it was terrifying.

The breath of the rose was softly borne to me on the morning breeze. I, with a strange impatience, left its proximity. It alone, of all my surroundings, seemed associated with some memory—forgotten, it is true, but nevertheless felt.

Suddenly my eyes rested on the pile of garments neatly folded beside my recently-vacated bed. Eureka! I had found the clue at last. Surely familiar apparel would prove to be the key which would unlock the hiding-place of memory. I eagerly examined one by one the garments, but, alas! I was doomed to be disappointed. Each was of fine texture and fashion, but brand new. I searched the pockets of the coat placed for me to wear (placed by whom?), but all were empty. Not a scrap of writing, or the veriest trifle that might have belonged to my forgotten self could I by diligent search discover. In the pockets of the waistcoat I found some twenty sovereigns, and these, so far as I knew, represented my sole worldly wealth. I tubbed and dressed myself in mute despair. When I opened the door of my mysterious bed-chamber, what should I find? More mysteries, or an elucidation of my terrible position? The latter I earnestly hoped for.

Presently I became conscious of the remarkable stillness of the house in which I had so strangely found myself an inmate. I had been too much absorbed before to heed, or indeed notice it; but I remembered now that I had heard none of the usual domestic noises. No opening or closing of doors, no footsteps, no voices; not one of the hundred early morning sounds which are distinctly audible even in the quietest household. I gazed at the door with, I am ashamed to say, something like fear. My mind instantly became full of fantastic and foolish fancies. Had I been bewitched and made to awake from an enchanted slumber with a different individuality? Had I been transported to a different sphere wherein all the past was forgotten? Had I lived centuries ago, and been born again a new creature?

The sudden shrill, sweet song of a bird outside my window rebuked my wild conjectures, and, in a measure, restored my equanimity. Directly the little songster had flown away I crossed over to the window, and, widely opening it, contemplated the view of the outside world presented to me.

Surely across the vista of chimney-pots I could discern

the dome of St. Paul's. My heart beat fast with thankfulness. I was in London; that fact was alone sufficient to drive away my nameless fears. No unknown hemisphere claimed me for its own. No magician had spell-bound me; but yet—and with the thought I sadly turned away from the window—the dome of St. Paul's and other recognisable landmarks had failed to restore to me my lost identity.

I thought of Hans Andersen's shadowless man, and envied him. He had but lost his shadow; I might be said to have lost my substantiality. I would no longer, though, waste my time in lamenting my lost state—I would boldly leave my chamber and seek its cure.

Brushing past the table in my haste to carry out my new resolution, I unwittingly inhaled the perfume of the rose again. Its scent seemed borne to me in the guise of a faint sigh. I took it into my hand and looked long and earnestly at it before I replaced it in the vase. What was its association with my past life?

As I asked myself this unanswerable question, I raised my eyes and met the gaze of a singular-looking man who had noiselessly crossed the threshold of my chamber. Seeing that I had observed him, he advanced a step further, and, in a clear and musical voice, said:

"I am Dr. Malchi. Who are you?"

CHAPTER II.

DR. MALCHI.

I DO not know how long we stood fixedly regarding each other. I—unable to answer his simple question—stared at him with a curiosity perhaps excusable under the extraordinary circumstances of our meeting. He—standing at his ease, and with a singular smile parting his strangely expressive lips—surveyed me (as I thought with sudden indefinable anger) after the manner in which the vivisectionist surveys a recently-experimented-on rabbit.

I have said that he was a singular-looking man, but I doubt if the word singular aptly describes him; he was more—he was extraordinary, repulsive, and yet remarkably attractive. He was (if I may be allowed so paradoxical an expression) a milk-white mulatto. That is to say that, while his closely-curling but silky, rather than woolly, hair, and prominent, wide, nostrilled nose, and full, sensuous lips, unmistakably pointed to his West Indian or Spanish-American ancestry, yet these characteristics his perfectly white skin and large brilliant eyes attempted to contradict. I do not even now know the exact hue of the latter, but, despite their brilliancy, and remarkable powers of expression, they were cruel eyes; but, here again a contradiction—their cruelty was belied by the self-indulgent and indolent curve of chin and facial outline altogether.

The doctor seemed aware of the mental analysis to which his face was being subjected, for his smile deepened suddenly.

"I am Dr. Malchi," he said again. "Who are you?"

I knew that he was mocking my inability to answer his question, and I naturally resented his impertinence.

"Stand aside," I said, haughtily. "I care not who you are, and it cannot matter to you who I am."

The smile vanished from his face, and was replaced by a somwhat anxious frown.

"Before you treat me thus cavalierly, young sir," he said "would it not be as well to ascertain your obligations to me?"

His words had much the same effect upon me as a sudden douche of cold water might. I shivered and drew a sharp breath. What were my obligations to this man? Great heaven! who was he, and who was I?

I suppose he noticed my spasm of emotion, for, advancing closer, he laid his hand upon my shoulder and said kindly enough:

"You are excited, and therefore petulant; but I do not easily take offence. Come with me. I am just going to breakfast; you will bear me company?"

I shook my head. "Food would choke me just now," I replied; and then, after a brief struggle with my pride, I brokenly told the doctor of my extraordinary failure of memory.

"My past life is a blank—a complete blank to me," I said, in conclusion. "For heaven's sake, man, do not laugh at me, but I have forgotten everything—everything concerning my own identity."

Far from evincing the least desire to laugh, Dr. Malchi regarded me with grave and interested attention.

"Your case is a strange, but not utterly unique, one," he said, presently; "but with your leave we will discuss it after we have broken our fast."

I impatiently freed myself from his detaining hand. "I cannot eat," I said (very rudely, I am afraid). "Do you not see that you alone have power to help me? Tell me who I am; you must know, since apparently I am your guest Tell me how I came here, and when."

He raised his hand somewhat playfully. "I am afraid I cannot satisfy your natural curiosity," he good-humouredly replied; "but do not be disheartened. After breakfast we will exchange confidences—at least," he added quickly, "you shall tell me all you know of yourself, and then I will tell you when, and under what circumstances, you became my very welcome guest."

He turned, as he spoke, to the open door, but I caught him by the arm.

"Answer me you shall one question," I determinately declared. "Am I mad? Answer me, man, and answer me truly."

The doctor was unaffectedly amazed at the question. He replied at once with evident sincerity.

"Mad! No, a thousand times no. You are as sane as I am."

I heaved a sigh of relief. My worst fear was exorcised.

"Come, follow me," commanded Dr. Malchi, glancing over his shoulder as he descended the staircase.

I followed him almost mechanically. He had—although I guessed it not—already taught me to obey him.

He led the way into a plainly-furnished room, wherein a substantial breakfast was awaiting him. Seating himself at the head of the table, he motioned me to a seat at his right hand. Directly we had taken our places a woman servant noiselessly entered the room, and glided behind the doctor's chair. I glanced at her with quick interest, but, alas! her

face was that of a stranger's, and it was easy to be seen (so at least, I thought), by her stealthy and inquisitive glance at me when first she entered the room, that she had not before been cognisant of my presence in the house.

"I have already learned two things," I meditatively reflected as I sipped my coffee. "Firstly, that I am a stranger here. Secondly, that this house has not sheltered me for many hours."

Dr. Malchi discoursed very pleasantly on gossipping social topics during the meal, and I, although disinclined for such conversation, was never at a loss to understand his allusions.

"I have not yet had time," he casually remarked, "to see H."—mentioning a certain actor who, to the best of my belief, had only been in London some three months.

"Have you not?" I answered, rather absently, for my thoughts were elsewhere; "I have—once."

The doctor glanced at me with a strange interest apparent in his brilliant eyes. He had noticed the halt in my reply, and he had guessed that it was due to my lack of any personal recollections in connection with that visit to the theatre.

Had I gone alone, or with friends? Where had I gone afterwards? I knit my brow in perplexity, and, pushing away my cup, waited with ill-concealed impatience for the doctor to finish his repast.

As I waited, I, without, I hope, being guilty of any grave breach of etiquette, more attentively scrutinised the face and figure of my extraordinary host.

I judged him to be about fifty years of age; certainly not more. He was of moderate height and sinewy figure which intuitively gave the beholder an idea of somewhat unusual strength and powers of endurance; which idea was borne out by his long, but remarkably well-shaped, hands and wrists, on which the nervous, whipcord-like muscles could be plainly seen. His face attracted and repelled me The dead white of his skin against his black, clustering hair was a veritable masterpiece of colouring; but the contrasts harmonised, although each gained an added peculiarity. His features certainly bore out all the characteristics of the base-born mulatto, but his noble forehead and grand head might have been inherited from kingly progenitors. He was

evidently an educated man, and *en rapport* with all the social and aristocratic topics of the day, and—but here my mental speculations were brought to an abrupt conclusion.

"I see that you are regarding with interest our deaf and dumb attendant," smilingly observed Dr. Malchi. "I will tell you one day, if you will deign to listen to it, her somewhat remarkable history."

I coloured with shame. He had pretended to attribute my inquisitiveness to the affliction of the woman who stood like a statue behind his chair, and who I, for the first time, noticed to be a deaf mute. I stammered out a half-apology to him; he had courteously rebuked my impertinent curiosity.

"I am not surprised at your notice of my silent handmaiden," he said, with a half-laugh; and still keeping up the farce of my supposed interest in the deaf and dumb woman, "but you will, I doubt not, get used to her in time. She is an invaluable servant, and her lack of speech," he added, lightly, "is one of her chief recommendations—to me at least."

I did not relish his vague suggestions concerning the prolongation of my stay in his house; so, ignoring the subject of his idle remarks, I said decisively:

"As I do not intend to inflict my company upon you longer than I can help, my personal likes and dislikes will neither affect your household—nor yourself."

Not to have saved my life could I have helped including the doctor as one who could have no authority over me in the future, in my declaration of independence; but, contrary to my expectation, he did not seemingly resent the liberty. He only smiled and slightly raised his eyebrows.

"I beg your pardon, sir; you have said truly; you will not, of course, honour my poor house longer with your presence—than you can help."

I glanced sharply at him; but apparently he had answered me without any sinister meaning lurking in his words, and I was already half ashamed of my assertion, which certainly savoured of ingratitude. Had I forgotten my helplessness if he refused to aid me? He alone could solve my terrible conundrum. He laid his knife and fork down at last, and daintily passed a napkin across his lips.

"Now I am at your service," he said, rising. "If you will accompany me into my study, we can converse undisturbed. See that we are, Leah," he added, turning to the dumb waiting-woman, whose eyes were attentively fixed on his lips.

She bowed her head assentingly, and opened the room door for her master and myself to pass out.

At the end of the long vestibule hung an olive-green curtain, curiously embroidered with gold arabesques. Drawing this aside, Dr. Malchi revealed behind it a door, which, taking the key from his pocket, he unlocked. He motioned me to precede him into the room, and then carefully closed and locked the door again.

"We will guard against interruptions," he said, in smiling apology of his latter act, and, handing me a chair, he seated himself opposite me.

The room was furnished with a semi-barbaric luxury, and admirably harmonised with its owner's peculiar caste of countenance; but I was too self-absorbed to admire, or indeed notice, the thousand rare and beautiful curiosities of all kinds lavishly scattered around. I pushed aside the offered chair, and faced the doctor with trembling excitement.

"I call upon you in the name of humanity," I said simply, "to help me out of the terrible abyss of forgetfulness into which I, by some unknown means, have been cast. Tell me who I am? Tell me how and when you first became acquainted with me?"

"Your first question," slowly replied the doctor, leaning back in his chair, and surveying me almost pityingly, "I cannot answer; your second I can."

I impatiently waved my hand for him to continue. My excitement was too great for words.

"Last evening, about ten p.m.," he proceeded, "I was returning from a friend's house, when, not a hundred yards from my own door, I noticed a police inspector and a man—evidently the driver of a cab which was drawn up close to the kerbstone—in anxious conversation. The inspector knows me by sight, and he immediately asked my advice concerning the subject of their conversation—the occupant of the cab—whom both men declared was at that moment

either in a singular swoon or in a state of drugged (by wine or otherwise) insensibility. I at once examined the seemingly unconscious stranger—yourself—and quickly satisfied myself that you were *not* drugged, nor, so far as I could tell, in any ordinary swoon. Your eyes were open, and your breathing and pulses normal, but you were certainly totally oblivious of everything transpiring around you. If your even breathing and regular pulses had not forbade the notion, I should have deemed your state one of suspended animation; but, of course, under the circumstances I have alluded to, that idea would have been ridiculous. I did not, however, lose any time in doing what I could to restore you. I had you brought into this house—strange to say, you unresistingly allowed yourself to be led in—and I did all that my medical experience suggested to speed your recovery, but my efforts were only partially successful. Your singular insensibility gradually merged into a healthful slumber, and I, with the help of the police inspector, assisted you to the chamber in which you awoke this morning. Directly my mind was relieved on your score, I requested the inspector to rigorously cross-examine the cabman concerning his own association with you. This he did in my presence, and I copied *verbatim* in my note-book the cabman's short narration, which, I am bound to say, was given with manifest sincerity."

The doctor paused, and unlocking a drawer in a magnificently-carved writing-table, he took out a small note-book.

"I will read you," he said, "what the cabman told us. You can, of course, easily verify his statement for yourself."

He fluttered over the leaves until he found the page he was looking for, and then, with only a passing glance at my terribly anxious face, he read aloud:—

"I, Richard Blake, No. 106, H—— Street cab-stand, was driving my empty cab through W—— Street, at half-past nine yesterday evening, when I was hailed by one of two gentlemen who were standing near the crossing directly opposite St. James's Park. I drew up beside them, and one of the gentlemen entered my cab. The other did not, so far as I now can remember, exchange any parting words of farewell with his friend. He told me to drive to S—— Square, where,

he said, my fare would give me further directions. I obeyed him, but after reaching S—— Square, and attempting in vain to attract the attention of the gentleman, I got off my box, and, opening the cab door, found him in an unconscious—or apparently unconscious—condition. Greatly puzzled what to do, and divided in my mind whether to take him to the police-station or the nearest hospital, I led the horse a few yards further on, and met, much to my relief, Inspector John Morse, of the B division, and while explaining my difficulty to him, a gentleman—recognised by Inspector Morse as Dr. Malchi, of 41, Pembroke Buildings, Chesterfield Road—came up to us and, after being put in possession of the facts, allowed my unconscious fare to be taken to his own house and there partially restored. I have nothing more to add save that, in the presence of Inspector Morse and Dr. Malchi, I have made this statement, whith I most solemnly assert to be true and inclusive.

(Signed) "RICHARD BLAKE."

The doctor closed his note-book, and meditatvely regarded me.

"Now that you know all I can tell you," he presently said, "I may, perhaps, be permitted to ask if your memory has completely returned, or if links in the chain of your past recollections are still missing?"

I sat down in the chair, and, covering my face with my hands (despise me not, reader), sobbed aloud.

"I cannot remember aught," I brokenly replied. "My existence, as far as my memory is concerned, commences only from this day."

Dr. Malchi rose somewhat impetuously, and bending over me until his head touched mine, cried in a strangely exultant voice, "You have said truly; your existence henceforth shall commence from this day."

CHAPTER III.

IN THE DOCTOR'S STUDY.

I LOOKED at Dr. Malchi with unfeigned amazement; I was at a loss to understand the meaning of his last words. I suppose he plainly read my bewilderment, for, calming himself with a prodigious effort, he said after a moment or two, "Pardon me: I fear I have annoyed you. Enthusiasm for my own profession, which must naturally regard your case as an almost unparalleled one, has made me momentarily forget the sympathy which, as a friend—if you will allow me to call myself one—I owe you. But you will forgive me, will you not?" and he held out his hand with a charming contrition.

I pressed it warmly. "You are indeed my only friend," I said, very sadly. "Verily I should be an ingrate if I showed myself insensible to your kindness by carping at any words of yours. But advise me, what can I do? How can I solve my stupendous enigma?"

He re-seated himself, and, leaning his head on his hand, profoundly meditated.

"Great heavens!" I said, springing to my feet, and wildly pacing the floor, "did ever sane man before find himself in a similar position to mine? Did ever sane man forget his name, his friends, his entire individuality? Why, the very idea of such forgetfulness is monstrous—nay, it is ludicrous, it is excruciatingly funny. See, I can even laugh at it myself," and my harsh laughter reverberated through the room.

The doctor raised his hand imperatively. "Hush! You must calm yourself, and look your position quietly in the face."

"Calm myself!" I repeated mockingly. "Ay, doctor, I like that advice; put yourself in my place; try to imagine what it feels like to have no past, no recollections of former joys or sorrows, no memories of childhood or youth, no friendships, no associations—imagine all this before you prate to me of calmness."

"I can and do imagine your position," very quietly replied Dr. Malchi, and the unobtrusive kindness in his voice insensibly soothed me; "but far from sharing your disgust—not to call it by a higher name—I am not in the least ashamed to say that I envy you."

"Envy me!" I echoed incredulously. "Nay, doctor, I do not wish you to sacrifice your veracity at the shrine of our newly-created friendship. Your pity I doubtless excite, but scarcely your envy."

A faint, a very faint, spot of colour burnt in Dr. Malchi's cheeks.

"I do envy you," he firmly reiterated, "believe me or not, as you please. Why, man"—and his voice was trembling with hardly-repressed excitement—"think for one moment of the many men—ay, and women—who would, if they could, gladly exchange places with you. What do men commit suicide for, think you? Is it not, in the majority of cases, to escape the haunting memory of a past that has grown accursed to them? What if some alchemist could offer for sale a veritable draught of the waters of Lethe, would he, think you, find no purchasers? Why, the very idea has power to conjure up the scene which would then be enacted. A vast crowd of people would tear each other limb from limb in their struggles to first drink of the proffered cup. I can see some of those people. Old men who know that dishonour awaits them on the morrow; young men who, perhaps by one rash act, have tarnished, not their souls, but what, in this nearly twentieth century, some of us deem far more precious—their reputation; women who would fain forget their shame, and others who would fain forget their sorrows; men and women whose lives are overshadowed by the memory of what might have been, had the Fates been more propitious; men and women, too, whose past has not only the power to curse their present, but the future of their unborn children, even unto the third and fourth generation. Would not the starving man fain forget his hunger, whether it were of body or soul? Would not the murderer lose, if he could, all recollection of his victim and his crime? Would not that draught of forgetfulness bring peace to all who purchased it? Why——but I tire you."

"Nay, you have rather alarmed me," I said, half jestingly, "since you envy me my oblivion, which, I assure you, is far more painful than pleasurable. I fear you will not aid me in my endeavours to resuscitate the memory of my former existence."

"On the contrary, I will help you to the utmost of my very limited powers," replied the doctor, with a smile which showed all his dazzling white teeth; "but, I pray you"—and he laid his hand with marked earnestness upon my shoulder—"be guided, be advised by me, and rest content in your most blessed and enviable forgetfulness. Remember that if your past has been strangely destroyed, your future still lies before you. Great heavens!" he added suddenly sinking his voice to a whisper, but keeping his eyes intently fixed on my face, "what would I not give to be in this man's place—to be able to enjoy the future without fear or even knowledge of my past."

I shuddered involuntarily. What had my strange host's past been, I wondered?

"I wish, then, that you could exchange places with me, doctor," I said, trying to speak lightly; "but as I fear that is impossible, I will dare to trespass further on your kindness, and ask you to advise me concerning the first steps I must take toward re-establishing my lost identity."

"You have scorned the advice I have just given you," observed the doctor, with gentle humour; "I can give you none truer, nor, according to my reasoning, more beneficial to yourself."

"I have not scorned it," I courteously returned, albeit I was becoming weary of the fruitless discussion; "I have rather declined it with thanks."

"But what if you fail to discover aught of your past individuality?" he suddenly asked. "What if you cannot disinter your past?"

"But I will," I hotly replied. "I do not think I shall find my task very difficult; but were it a thousand times harder than I expect, I will not rest until I have accomplished it."

"Then, in that case, I will not discourage you, or seek to point out the difficulties which will necessarily beset your quest," suavely remarked my companion. "I will, as I said just now, assist you to the best of my ability; but—pardon

me, I fear you will resent my continued interference—but ere you contemptuously throw away your extraordinary gift, will you not, at least, allow yourself some days in which to reflect on your purposed act?"

"I will not allow myself moments, even," I cried, impetuously rising to my feet. "I will leave this house at once, and commence without delay to unravel the mystery of my hideous forgetfulness. Why," I added somewhat more coolly, "even if, by any miracle, I could be made willing to begin my life from to-day, my impecuniosity would forbid me; save for a few sovereigns, my dear doctor, your guest is penniless."

"Really?" smiled the doctor, lifting his eyebrows. "But want of funds need not drive you to unveil the past. My house is at your service, and doubtless——"

"I will not encroach upon your hospitality longer than I am compelled to, sir," I replied, very coldly. "Before I incur new debts, I must pay off old ones."

Dr. Malchi bowed his handsome head very haughtily. "You have justly reproved me," he said, in a voice as cold as my own.

There was an uncomfortable silence between us, lasting possibly some five minutes, and then my host, with all his old friendliness of manner, said brightly:

"And now, how shall we set about our quest? If I cannot help you with suggestions, I can at least second you in your endeavours. You shall lead, and I will follow, and it shall go hard with us if our united efforts are not speedily crowned with success."

"You are overwhelming me with kindness," I exclaimed, fervently. "I will not, I promise you, regret my temporary loss of memory since it has led to our acquaintance, and inaugurated what I sincerely trust will be a lasting friendship."

"My hand upon that," enthusiastically returned the doctor, and for the second time since the commencement of the interview our hands met. "And now to business," he gaily cried. "Have you mentally planned out your campaign?"

"I intend, first of all," I thoughtfully responded, "to see and closely question the cabman—Richard Blake—and I certainly hope to obtain from him a clue which will in its turn con-

duct me to the mysterious stranger who, according to Blake's testimony, placed me in his vehicle. This stranger, doubtless, drugged me with some hellish compound, or in some way is accountable for my most remarkable forgetfulness. I will find him if I search the world over, and, when found, he shall not escape his just punishment. Of course, it is possible that some accidental circumstance may revive my memory——"

"It is certainly possible," interrupted the doctor, "but hardly probable."

"Surely I shall meet with some acquaintance, or be brought into connection in some way with my past," I mused aloud, hardly noticing his sardonic interruption. "My present state of ignorance cannot last many hours longer. But," rousing myself from my brief abstraction, "my first task is easy enough at all events; I will at once go to H—— Street and cross-examine the cabman."

"If you wish it, I will accompany you," said Dr. Malchi; but——"

"I will not trouble you at the very outset of my investigations," I said, waiting for him to precede me out of the room; "but, if you will allow me, I will return and report matters, and consult with you concerning my next wisest step."

"I have only a few patients," said the doctor, "but I confess that my mornings are, as a rule, fully occupied. After dinner, though—mind, we dine at seven, and I shall wait for you—I shall be entirely at your service."

"A thousand thanks," I said, passing out with him into the vestibule. "And now, doctor, wish me luck on my most extraordinary errand."

He laughed and gaily waved his hand in farewell.

"At present you have a monopoly of luck," he cried, "and you are not wise enough to prize it; I must wish you less rather than more."

At the extreme end of the vestibule, I chanced to glance backwards at Dr. Malchi as he, holding back the olive-green curtain with one hand, watched me out of sight. Our eyes met, and I am ashamed to say that his gleaming orbs and intensely black and white colouring caused me to liken him, in my own mind, to a beautiful but deadly snake,

which only awaited an opportunity to fasten its fangs in the flesh of its unconscious victim.

I let myself out of the house door, but ere I could close it a hand stole through the aperture, and a small piece of paper was thrust into my fingers. Before I could recover from my astonishment, the door was abruptly closed, and I was shut out of Dr. Malchi's abode. With trembling impatience, I unfolded the paper, and read with avidity the five words scrawled upon it:—

ONE ENEMY—ONE FRIEND. BEWARE!"

CHAPTER IV.

REGINA.

IT was a clear, brilliant morning; the sun shone brightly on the London pavements, and the soft west wind seemed to whisper what that morning must be in the country, and to seek, as it were, to tempt the busy men and women, whose anxious, careworn faces it fanned, to forsake the crowded streets, and follow it into scented fields, and cool, leafy woods.

I somewhat abstractedly pursued my way toward H—— Street. I was pondering over the purport of the mysterious message so strangely delivered to me. Had the deaf and dumb woman written it, and awaited her opportunity of secretly giving it to me; or had some unknown inmate of the house seized his or her first chance of warning me; or had Dr. Malchi himself been the author, and possibly the giver, of it?

My speculations were each and all in vain. I could not arrive at any satisfactory conclusion. Who was the enemy, and who was the friend? How could I arm myself against unknown dangers? I stopped abruptly, and tearing the message which I still held in my hand into a dozen pieces, I flung it carelessly into the gutter. I would not, I determined, trouble my head any more about it. I would instead

devote all my thoughts and all my energies to the unravelling of my own terrible puzzle. But stay—had the clue to that puzzle already been placed in my hands, and had I unwittingly despised it? I could not tell, but I resolved to strictly adhere to my original plan of action.

As I threaded my way through the crowded West End thoroughfares, I eagerly scanned the faces of the passers-by. Surely I should presently recognize one as a familiar one, or perchance I might, to my unspeakable joy, find myself recognised, and hailed by name. But, alas! among all the hurrying crowd, no face nor voice had power to strike the keynote of my lost memory.

I turned sadly enough down H—— Street, and quickly found the cab-stand; but, on making inquiries of the first Jehu, I found to my annoyance that No. 106 had, only ten minutes before, been hired out for the day.

"He will just turn up here for five minutes to-night to settle up, you know," said a cab inspector, who had overheard my inquiry, "and then he will be off duty until to-morrow. If you want to see him, sir, you had better look round in the morning."

"I'll see him to-night if I can," I replied. "When will he be due back?"

"Well, sir, it's rather hard to say," said the inspector, thoughtfully stroking his nose. "He's been hired by a wedding party, who wanted to make a little jaunt out of town; but as they didn't seem able to make up their minds where to go, they agreed to pay for a full day, so I sha'n't expect No. 106 back until I see him."

I reflected for a moment. "Where does he live? I'll come here to-night on the chance of seeing him, but if I fail I will call on him early to-morrow morning, before he leaves home."

"I'll get you his address in one moment, sir," said the inspector, and taking out a memorandum-book from his pocket, he ran his finger down one of its pages. "Sullivan, Holmes, Jackson, Blake—here we are, sir: No. 4, Paradise Terrace, Turner Street, Hammersmith. You will have to call on him early, sir, to make sure of catching him before he's off for the day. Thank you, sir; much obliged."

More disheartened than I cared to admit even to myself,

I strolled slowly on toward the city. I did not know what next to do. The slight check my investigations had thus early received had depressed me, and, although I strove to shake off the feeling, inclined me, nevertheless, to regard it as an unfavourable omen of the result of my quest. By-and-bye I wandered into Hyde Park, and, sitting down on a seat beneath a tree, I strove to realise, to its utmost extent, my most extraordinary situation.

I was deprived by one fell stroke of friends, name, position, and personality. Unless I could regain the memory of my own past existence, I must be of all men the most miserable. How had I lost that memory? Could some strange mental metamorphosis have taken place in me within the last four and twenty hours? Could memory alone have been paralysed, while my intellectual powers were left untouched? Could mine be a new soul inhabiting an unfamiliar body, or had I been the victim of some hideous jugglery? Who was the man that had hailed the cabman? Could he have drugged and, possibly, robbed me? Could it be that my memory was lying dormant, needing only some kindly ray from the past to awaken it into vigorous life; or was it gone, gone for evermore? Could any doctor aid me to recover it? Had any ever met with a similar case to mine? I started to my feet with the intention of consulting the nearest physician; but as I remembered the hopeless difficulty of making my story clear, even to the most sympathetic of medical men, I sank back again on the seat. I should, very probably, be deemed a madman, and handed over to the care of the nearest authorities. Dr. Malchi, thank God, had not questioned my sanity. He had, after all, acted towards me with far more consideration and kindness than I might have reasonably expected to receive from a stranger. He had not, apparently, doubted the truth of my story, neither had he shown any mortifying surprise at it. He had, in spite of my impatience and petulance, treated me with marked courtesy. I would, I silently determined, remember for the future the claim he held on my gratitude.

I mused thus for several hours. People strolled and gossipped near me, and several eyed me curiously; but, after my first quick glance at their faces, I heeded them not. Little children laughed and played around me, but when one

of them chanced to gaze at me with innocent inquisitiveness I turned morosely away from the wondering eyes. I—a man grown—envied the little children their happy memory of the sunny years through which they had already tripped. Presently one of them—a dimpled golden-haired fairy—timidly touched my hand.

"Poor man," she said, gravely sympathetic, "have you been naughty?"

I shook my head. "No," I said, trying to smile; "I am only very unhappy."

The little maiden's blue eyes became very compassionate.

"Poor man, poor man," she said, gently patting my hand. "Lilla is very sorry for you;" and then, after profound cogitation, she suddenly asked, "Have you got a little girl like me at home?"

I shook my head again. I feared the child's questions were leading me deeper into the slough of perplexity.

"Well, then, I 'pose you've got a good mother, just like mine?" she returned, visibly triumphing in her penetration.

I pushed the soft hand away. "Go and play, little one," I said, harshly. "I am only a very unhappy man; you cannot help me."

The child's rosebud mouth quivered for an instant. "Lilla is very sorry for you," she repeated with aggrieved dignity; "though you are cross, yet Lilla is sorry for you."

I leaned suddenly forward, and held out my hand with a swift contrition for my unkind reception of her childish sympathy. "Kiss me, little one," I pleaded, "and say—'Poor man, I hope your search will be successful.'"

"Very long word that last one," commented Lilla, but she did as I bade her, and, after a temporary struggle with the long word, got it out victoriously; and then, advising me to go home and tell my mother I was unhappy, she danced away after some little companions, and was lost to my sight.

The child had all unwittingly increased my unhappiness. I wandered disconsolately from the park, and, more for lack of occupation than for any real craving for food, entered a restaurant and ordered a slight repast. I tried to read one or two of the newspapers scattered around me, but after a few moments' perusal, I laid them down. My mind was too occupied with myself to care for the sayings or doings of the

outside world, so long as those sayings and doings seemingly connected not themselves with me in any way.

I mechanically ate the food brought me, and it strengthened and refreshed me. I might, for aught I knew, have been without food for more hours than I reckoned, for I had made but the merest pretence of eating at Dr. Malchi's breakfast table. I was certainly invigorated, and inclined to smile at my recent depression.

"My curious disease will be cured by a night of healthful slumber," I thought to myself, as I quitted the restaurant, and walked, aimlessly enough, along the Strand. "I shall awake myself once more, and relate the story of this day's adventures with as keen a sense of enjoyment as will doubtless be felt by my laughing listeners."

After some hours of desultory wandering, I bethought me that if I did not wish to keep Dr. Malchi and his dinner waiting, I must at once betake myself to his house. I retraced my steps accordingly, but as I turned into Chesterfield Road, a curious horror concerning my purposed reentrance into Dr. Malchi's abode took possession of me. I tried to fight against it, but once, twice, thrice my feet almost involuntarily carried me past the door which had been so mysteriously closed in my face. Some presentiment of future ill seemed to warn me from again crossing its threshold. "Flee, flee, while yet there is time," a voice seemed to whisper in my ear, but common sense forbade me to listen to it. Dr. Malchi had surely shown himself to be my very good friend. How could I be so base, so ungrateful, as to ignore his past kindness, and, for no reason at all, cut myself adrift from the only man who, as it were, formed the connecting link between my past and present? Beside, the mysterious message had hinted of the existence of a friend as well as an enemy beneath (presumably) that roof. Whether, therefore, Dr. Malchi was my friend or foe, I would not prove indifferent to my own future welfare by neglecting to avail myself of any chance, however remote, of regaining my lost memory.

I turned resolutely on my heel, and, walking boldly up the whitened steps, rang the bell with a steady hand.

The door was almost immediately opened by the dumb woman. She did not show any surprise at seeing me, but curtseying deferentially, at once led the way into a large and

handsomely furnished drawing-room. It was untenanted, and, after wheeling an inviting-looking easy chair toward me, she noiselessly disappeared.

"This woman certainly was not the writer of the mysterious message," I thought, half laughingly, as I flung myself wearily into the chair. I had been a fool to credit her, even in my remotest fancy, with it. She was only a staid, highly respectable servant, whose thoughts, doubtless, soared not beyond the circle of her domestic duties.

My eyes wandered idly round the room. It was an undeniably handsome apartment, but its gorgeous colouring and lavishly magnificent furniture jarred upon me. It was pre-eminently a room arranged and intended to satiate the eye without in any way gratifying the nobler senses. Tiring presently of my aimless survey, I began to wonder where my host was. On consulting the clock on the overmantel I found it already long past the time named by Dr. Malchi as his dinner hour; and as the moments wore on, and he came not, I grew more and more uneasy, lest his delay should prevent my revisiting, as I had planned, the cab-stand. I would not willingly forego the opportunity of instituting my inquiries, and I futilely regretted my acceptance of his invitation.

Just as my impatience was getting too great for passive endurance, the door opened and Dr. Malchi hastily entered.

"Detained by a tiresome patient," he said, in smiling apology; and before I could return him any answer, he remarked, with an indescribable exultation in his voice, "You have not succeeded—yet?"

"Not yet," I replied, assuming a light-heartedness which I was far from feeling; "but I——

"Excuse me," he interrupted, ringing the bell. "Dinner has been waiting an unconscionable time; you shall tell me all afterwards."

I followed him into the adjacent apartment, but before taking his place at the table, he, addressing the dumb woman, said:

"Tell Miss Latimer it is my wish that she dines with us to-day."

She bent her head and immediately left us.

The doctor did not speak again; he stood irritably tapping his fingers against the back of a chair, and gazing at the

door. I, very little interested, also silently awaited the advent of the woman thus commanded, rather than requested, to favour us with her company.

Almost before Leah might have been supposed to have delivered her message a rustling of silken skirts was heard, and a most beautiful girl entered the room with a swift and yet half-angry grace.

"You have sent for me, sir, and I have obeyed your order," she said in a strangely disdainful voice as she confronted Dr. Malchi.

"You are ever obedient, Regina," smiled my host; but the tone of his voice, as well as his smile, was singularly mocking.

"Let me present to you my adopted daughter, Miss Regina Latimer," he added, turning to me. "Regina, you will, for my sake, I hope, honour this gentleman with your friendship."

I hardly noticed the dexterous way in which Dr. Malchi had overcome the difficulty of not addressing me by name. My eyes, my thoughts were wholly fixed upon the woman standing before me.

I have said that she was beautiful, but how can I describe her rare loveliness? If I catalogue her starry midnight eyes, her wealth of raven hair, her perfect features, her peach-like complexion, her rounded figure, and her stately height, I shall have drawn but a vague portrait of Regina Latimer. I cannot pourtray the mingled passion and sweetness which lurked in her dark orbs any more than I can the varying expression of her haughtily beautiful face. Regina she was indeed rightly named. She was verily a queen amongst women.

I stood looking almost stupidly at her for some moments after my host had taken his place, and not until he somewhat significantly bade me seat myself did I awake to a sense of my own unpardonable rudeness. Deeply ashamed, I sank into my allotted seat, and vainly strove to recover the composure I had so strangely lost.

Dr. Malchi discoursed as fluently at dinner as he had at breakfast, but his witty pleasantries received but scant encouragement from either of his companions. Miss Latimer looked more like a beautiful statue than a living woman She barely lifted her eyes from her plate, and replied only

in monosyllables to the few remarks I dared address to her. Once, and once only, did I see her glance towards me and the momentary interest the glance betrayed mystified rather than flattered me—it was so strange a blending of scornful curiosity and contemptuous pity. I smarted as much beneath it as if it had been an unexpected lash from a hidden whip. And yet I felt that her contempt was not so hard to bear as her indifference would have been.

The doctor did not allude in any way to the extraordinary circumstance under which I had become and remained his guest. I wondered how much, or how little, Miss Latimer knew of my singular history. Perhaps—and the sudden thought made my cheeks tingle—she regarded me as some adventurer who had successfully imposed upon her adopted father's credulity. If so, she might indeed consider me worthy only of her contempt. I would, I inwardly resolved, take the first opportunity that presented itself to banish such a suspicion from her mind. I was not, at all events, a willing impostor; I was only the victim of a frightful mental metamorphosis. She would believe my repudiation of any willingly-practised deceit. She would be sorry for me. Her lovely, disdainful eyes would grow humid and pitiful. Her haughty lips would tremble a little with unspoken sympathy, and her sweet compassion would make me forget the cause which had given it birth.

The dumb woman waited upon us at dinner. Almost before the simplest want was expressed, she deftly comprehended and relieved it. She fully, indeed, deserved the high encomiums her master had passed upon her, but, for my part, I would have preferred being waited upon by a more common-place and less ghost-like attendant. Directly dinner was over, Miss Latimer, with a cold bow, left the doctor and me alone.

"I will send our friend to you presently," said Dr. Malchi, as she swept past his chair; "you will give him a cup of coffee, will you not?"

She bowed a little more coldly, if possible, and without vouchsafing a word or glance to me, as I stood holding the door open for her to pass out, she entered the room I had been shown into before dinner.

I somewhat reluctantly returned to my seat. Why could

I not have followed her at once? Why must I go through the farce of pretending to listen with interested attention any longer to Dr. Malchi's gossipping tittle-tattle? I impatiently thought, greatly disparaging the sparkle and crispness of the aforesaid tittle-tattle. Presently the doctor, passing one of the decanters to me, broached the subject of my morning's quest.

"No success as yet?" he gently interrogated.

I briefly told him that I had failed to interview the cabman, but hoped to do so before I slept, or at least, I added (mindful of the promised cup of coffee to be drank in Miss Latimer's presence, and of the conversation which might possibly be afterwards enjoyed), if not that night, early the next morning.

"Ah, I am an early riser, and if you select to-morrow morning for your visit to Paradise-terrace, I will, if you will allow me, accompany you," courteously volunteered my host.

"Thanks heartily," I gratefully replied; "I shall, indeed, be glad of your company."

A knock at the door heralded the approach of Leah with a letter for her master.

With a brief apology, he opened and read it.

"Is the messenger waiting, Leah?" he asked.

She bent her head assentingly.

"I must, I am afraid, see him," said the doctor, turning to me. "If you grow tired of waiting my return," he added, "you can find your way into the drawing-room, and improve your acquaintance with Miss Latimer."

My heart beat very fast at the prospect of a *tête à tête* with the glorious girl who had thought me only worthy of her contemptuous compassion; but I bowed and murmured some unintelligible words of regret concerning the doctor's enforced withdrawal, and my pleasure in acceding to his kind suggestion.

As soon as decency would permit me after the doctor's back was turned, I betook myself with trembling excitement to the room already occupied by Miss Latimer.

She was idly reclining in a low velvet chair. She did not seem conscious of my approach, being apparently absorbed in deep thought. I jealously wondered of whom or what she

was thinking. I suppose she became aware of my presence by some mesmeric influence, for she looked up, with a radiant smile which made her for the moment lovelier than ever, and set all my pulses wildly throbbing.

"I have been expecting you," she said, with unlooked-for friendliness of manner. "Please ring the bell, and I will give you some coffee."

I did as requested, and then, at her invitation, seated myself opposite her. The ubiquitous Leah appeared with the coffee, but as soon as she handed me my cup, she withdrew and left us alone.

"Miss Latimer," I said, very hurriedly, for I feared the doctor's entrance every moment, "I do not know if my very good friend Dr. Malchi has made you acquainted with all the facts of my most extraordinary awakening under his hospitable roof this morning. Has he told you that I have lost all remembrance of my past life—aye, even of my own identity, my name, my—— ?"

"He has told me everything," she interrupted, almost sadly; and then, fixing her bright eyes very earnestly upon me, she asked, "Cannot you account for your own mental void in any way?"

"I will account for it," I said very quietly; "but whether that explanation will come under the head of some new and—save in my case—hitherto unknown mental disease, or whether I have been the victim of some unprincipled—wizard, I was going to say, Miss Latimer, but as the age of wizards has passed away, I will say rogue instead—I know not. My memory will, of course, come back to me."

"It will never come back," she said, in a low thrilling whisper, "if you do not seek for it—seek for it with unceasing earnestness."

I glanced at her, a little surprised at the suppressed passion in her voice, but she quickly recovered her ordinary calmness.

"I mean," she explained, fluttering a large crimson fan to and fro, "that if you wish to regain it, you must not, of course, be daunted by any obstacles in your path. You must be patient, but, above all, you must be in earnest in your search."

"Dear Miss Latimer," I said, smiling a little, "you need not fear the waning of my perseverance, or my patience. I

would put an end to my existence to-night rather than remain many hours longer in my present terrible position."

She seemed as if about to speak, and then, suddenly altering her mind, allowed a faint sigh instead to escape her parted lips.

As I sipped my coffee I talked to her of the way in which I purposed setting about my quest. She listened very attentively, but did not make any comment. After a moment or two I, described to her my weary and fruitless wanderings of the morning, and she smiled at my recital with a radiant compassion.

"I cannot spend all my life scanning the London streets and parks for a face which I shall be able to recognise as familiar," I said with a boyish laugh; "neither can I startle the Scotland-yard authorities by asking them to kindly find out who I am."

She laughed very softly. "No, you cannot do the last-named," she said presently, with sweet gravity; "but if, with all your concentrated force of will, you seek your lost memory, your lost consciousness of previous existence, you will, rest assured, find it——"

"And revere ever afterwards the true prophetess yet left in London," I replied.

"Dr. Malchi is late," she said, rather abruptly. "If you like I will play to you until he comes—" and her eyes rested on a magnificent violin lying near her.

I would have preferred, had the choice been left me, of continuing our confidential conversation, but her offer left me no other course than to instantly fetch her violin and seat myself to listen.

After a little delay she commenced to play. I did not recognise the music, and the thought struck me that she was improvising it; if so, each dulcet note spoke of extraordinary genius. In her hands the violin became a living creature; it was passionate, sorrowful, pleading, terrible, pathetic, each by turns. I listened to it with a strange emotion. It—although it seemed but a mad fancy—was as though she was trying to tell me, through her violin, the story of my forgotten existence. She fixed her eyes on me now and again with a strange intentness, and then the thrilling music would flood my soul with a passionate longing for some

happiness which either had been mine or yet was to be. Suddenly the music changed and merged into cold and emotionless harmony. I gazed at her with surprise, and noticed at the same moment the presence of Dr. Malchi in the room. As the last soft chord died away, he advanced.

"I can see, Regina, that your music has not fallen on unappreciative ears," he said, with one of his frequent smiles.

She did not answer, but, much to my dismay, relapsed almost at once into the cold silence which I had previously deemed habitual to her. Very soon afterwards she left the room, with a brief good-night; and I, not ten minutes later, prayed my host to allow me to retire to my own chamber.

"I am sadly tired," I said, apologetically; "I have had a terribly exciting day, and will, with your leave, endeavour to get a few hours' sleep before I commence my extraordinary search."

"Still in the same mind, eh?" he asked, lifting his eyebrows—another frequent trick, by the way.

"Yes, and likely to remain so," I rejoined with a laugh; "good-night, doctor—you will accompany me in the morning?"

"I will; good night," he answered, following me with his eyes to the door.

I went at once to my room—the one I had occupied the previous night. I was filled with a strange excitement. Regina Latimer's lovely face still floated before me; her weird music still echoed in my ears. I longed for the morning to dawn which should again bring me into her presence. I softly murmured her name aloud. I had almost forgotten my singular loss of memory. "What mattered," I thought, recklessly, "any recollection of any existence wholly unconnected with Regina Latimer? What mattered any past unshared with her?"

As I was slowly undressing, I chanced to notice a few scattered rose leaves on the carpet. I glanced at the vase on the table by the bedside. Lo, it was empty! I felt instantly saddened, although, not to have saved my life, could I have explained why. I carefully gathered the fallen rose-leaves into my hand, and gazed at them long and earnestly. What frail link of memory did they form between my past and present? I could not tell. I could only stroke the

half-withered petals, and carefully lay them between the leaves of the pocket-book, which, with a few other trifling necessaries, I had purchased that morning.

Could Regina (I lingeringly repeated the name) have placed the flower beside me while I still halted between consciousness and unconsciousness, or was it, indeed, a token from my forgotten past?

While I was seeking the solution to my latest puzzle, slumber overpowered me, and revived again in dreams every word and glance of Dr. Malchi's adopted daughter.

CHAPTER V.

I DISCOVER MY OWN NAME.

I AWOKE with a perfect recollection of all that had taken place the day before, but, contrary to my expectations, my memory, even after some hours of sound and refreshing slumber, carried me back no farther. I was still completely unconscious of my own identity. I might seemingly have numbered my existence by hours. I marvelled at myself as I made a speedy toilet. Surely my case was an unique one. My second awakening, however, did not inspire me with the despondency which had followed my awakening of the morning before. I was indeed more elated than depressed. Had not my strange experience mysteriously led me to Regina Latimer? Had she not blessed me with her sympathy, and encouraged me with words of girlish wisdom? What cared I for aught beside? I was no longer lonely, no longer without a friend. If my past was destined to be wholly forgotten, did not a long sunny future lie before me? Aye, a future made sunny by love.

When I descended into the breakfast-room, I found Dr. Malchi alone awaiting me. Miss Latimer was not visible, neither did the doctor make any allusion to her non-appearance. Once or twice I attempted to frame some ordinary inquiry concerning her, but I could not command my voice sufficiently to name her without a tremulous interest which I feared my host would at once notice and possibly resent.

We sallied out directly our hasty breakfast was eaten, and a little less than an hour's sharp walking brought us to the door of No. 4, Paradise Terrace, Turner Street. Early as the hour was, there were plenty of people astir in the narrow street which led directly from a large and important thoroughfare. Paradise Terrace itself was a row of small houses, all identically alike, and all bearing outward and visible signs of their occupiers' limited incomes and unlimited families. Slatternly women were loudly rating their unfortunate offspring. Men—out of work and out at elbows—were lounging against the windows of the public-houses, and growling out invectives against everything and everybody in general. Babies were toiling beneath the weight of other babies. Shock-headed youngsters were playing pitch and toss in the gutter, and a strong smell of mottled soap plainly testified to the existence (somewhere or other) of short-tempered but hard-working matrons.

No. 4 was a trifle cleaner than its immediate neighbours, and boasted a placard, which informed the passer by that Mrs. Blake, not content with being a clear-starcher, dabbled occasionally in the monthly nurse line. My knock brought Mrs. Blake herself to the door. She was a thin, timid-looking woman, and my inquiry for her husband was answered with evident anxiety.

"He's just swallowing a mouthful of breakfast before setting off for the stables," she said; "but, sir"—and her voice shook a little—"I hope there's nothing wrong up there?"

"Up there," plainly meant the head-quarters—wherever they might be—of her husband's employers, so I at once set her mind at rest on that point, at least.

"I have come on a matter of personal business," I said, "and I want a few minutes' quiet talk with your husband."

Still visibly perturbed, she led the way into a small but clean room, where, surrounded by half a dozen olive branches in various stages of undress, her husband—a stout, jolly-faced fellow—sat alternately attacking a large lump of boiled bacon and the contents of a Britannia teapot.

He recognised us directly we entered the room, and, rising, ducked his head.

"Glad to see you, gen'men," he said, in a naturally hoarse voice. "I heard that a gen'man had been asking one of the guv'nors for me yesterday, and I guessed that you was the gen'man," with another duck at me.

"I should like to speak to you in private," I said, glancing somewhat significantly at his anxiously-expectant wife, and his open-eyed and open-mouthed progeny.

"Clear out, you kids," he said, enforcing the parental command with sundry indiscriminate cuffs; "and you, too, missus."

I tried to soften the latter delicate hint by suggesting that Mrs. Blake need not efface herself unless she chose; but she meekly backed out of the room, taking with her all the young Blakes, who showed themselves averse to temporary banishment.

Dr. Malchi, save for a brief nod of recognition at the man, showed no interest whatever in my proceedings. He stood a little nearer the small window than either of us, meditatively tapping his silver-headed cane against his polished boot, and apparently only listening to our conversation with superficial attention.

The cabman, at my request, related the details of my unconscious journey. He was evidently fully aware that my illness had not been an ordinary one, and he embellished his narration with graphic remarks concerning his fear lest I should become a "dead un" ere he could attract the attention of the police.

"But, my good fellow," I said, "I want you to particularly describe the appearance of the man who told you to drive me to S—— Square. I suspect that he was accountable for my strange unconsciousness."

Dr. Malchi ceased tapping his boot, and fixed his eyes on Blake, who did not show much astonishment at my assertion.

"You were drugged or hocus-pocused in some way, then, was you, sir?" he thoughtfully rejoined. "Well, I ain't surprised to hear it, for yours was the queerest illness that ever I saw."

I nodded my head shortly. "Tell me what the stranger with me that night was like. Do not omit the least detail of his appearance you can remember; I particularly want to trace him."

"I see, sir, and settle your little account with him," observed the cabman, with an approving chuckle. "Well, sir, I am sorry to say that I didn't notice him sufficiently to be able to describe his looks exactly like; but I know that he was a man—or a gentleman, I should say—of middle height and rather stoutish growth; but to save my life I couldn't describe his features, although I've got an idea how I might, perhaps, recognise him again if I had to pick him out from amongst a lot of men."

A singular expression came into Dr. Malchi's eyes. I, chancing to observe him, knew at once that he distrusted the cabman's assertion concerning his non-ability to more closely describe the stranger.

"For heaven's sake, man!" I said, almost pleadingly, "help me to find him. Surely you can remember him if you try. Take your time; search well your memory—I must, I will find him."

"I suppose he drugged and robbed you afterwards?" asked the cabman, with a curiosity which, under the circumstances, struck me as only natural.

"Yes, he robbed me," I repeatedly bitterly, "robbed me of more than I can describe to you. But try to recall him to your recollection; I will reward you if you can only bring me face to face with him."

Dr. Malchi turned on his heel, and steadily eyed the man.

"Would you, do you think, remember his voice?" he asked, speaking for the first time.

"N—o, I am afraid not, sir," replied Blake, with a curious hesitation, which I was not slow to notice.

"Well, force yourself to recollect all you can of him," I said, impatiently. "Was he fair or dark, young or old?"

"S'help me if I can remember anything about him, save that he was a rather stout, well-dressed man," he declared, after a moment or two of hard thinking. "You see, sir when he hailed me I was driving along at a smartish pace. I just turned my head round, but you was the gen'man nighest me, so I didn't do more than give a look at the other."

"Stop a minute," I said, sternly. "Do you mean to tell me that you observed nothing strange in my appearance—nothing at all to make you suspect that I was drugged?

(which, of course, I must have been)," I added in a lower tone to Dr. Malchi, who only somewhat absently nodded his head, so intently was his attention fixed on the apparently genuinely perplexed cabman.

"No, sir, I didn't," he answered at once. "Directly I pulled up you got into the cab ——"

"Did I, so far as you could see, enter it of my own free will?" I interrupted.

"Lor', yes, sir," he readily responded. "The other gen'man might have helped you in, but if he did I didn't see him. Anyhow, he shut the door directly, and told me to drive to S—— Square, where ——"

"Tell me what he said in, as nearly as you can remember them, his own words," I requested.

Blake scratched his head thoughtfully. "Well, sir, he said, 'Drive the gentleman to S—— Square, where he will give you further directions.' That was every word he said, sir and that I'll take my oath to before any magistrate."

"But did you not think it strange that you were not given your full directions at once?" I asked, after some anxious meditation.

"I can't say I did, sir," replied the man. "If I had thought about the matter at all — which I did not — I should only have supposed that, at your parting with your friend, you hadn't determined on the place you next would go to—say it was one of the theatres, and you hadn't decided which—or, again, I might have supposed that you intended to make a call at one of the houses in the square, and that you were unable to give me more correct directions. No, sir, no cabman could have seen anything strange in the order."

"Will you not see if you cannot get more successful answers to your questions?" I said, addressing Dr. Malchi. "Perhaps your ingenuity can suggest some better plan of cross-examination."

"I am afraid not," he replied, in answer to my last remark; but he at once confronted the cabman, who for the last five minutes had stood with his watch in his hand. "If you cannot recollect the strange gentleman's features, or any personal peculiarities, you can, I suppose, describe the clothes worn by him?"

"Yes; I can do that," eagerly exclaimed the man—"at

least, I know he wore a dark blue, or black—I wouldn't swear which—overcoat, with a large cape to it, and a rather odd-looking travelling cap, which, now I come to remember ——"

"Odd-looking, in what way?" sharply interrupted the doctor.

"Well, sir," slowly replied the man, "it was a fur cap worn well over the face, but the flaps intended to be drawn over the ears were fastened together on the crown with a queer kind of claw ornament, set in what I took to be gold, but of course it might have been gilt instead."

"Hurrah! a clue at last," softly exclaimed the doctor, patting me on the shoulder. "Now we have only to discover the owner of this ornamented travelling cap, and we shall have successfully accomplished the object of our quest."

"Nay, I shall but have commenced it, I fear," I sadly replied.

"I'm sorry to hurry you, gen'men," broke in the cabman, fidgetting with his watch, "but I'm already overdue at the stand. If you think that I can give you any more information, I'll wait upon you either to-night or early to-morrow morning, but I must be off to the stables now."

"Ah, that reminds me," said the doctor. "Did it occur to you to search the cab after you had left Mr. ——, this gentlemen, I mean, at my house?" "I fully meant to search it myself," he whispered to me, "but unaccountably neglected o do so. We must not despise even the most improbable way of obtaining a clue."

At that moment Mrs. Blake deprecatingly put her head round the doorway.

"You'll be awful late, Dick," she plaintively remarked, "and you know the guv'nor said he'd fine you the very next time you missed your stand in the rank."

"I can't help it," wrathfully exclaimed Mr. Blake. "The gen'men be a-badgering my life out with their questions and —oh, yes, I can see through a stone wall as well as most men—their insinivations, so if I'm fined it won't be my fault. I hope you'll excuse my saying it, sir, but next time you be taken ill, or drugged, whichever it wur, I hope as how I sha'n't be called upon to drive you anywhere."

"Lor, Dick," said Mrs. Blake with a feeble excitement,

"you don't mean to say that one of these gents is the one that was all stupid-like and speechless in your cab the other night?"

"I am that unfortunate man," I said quietly; "but you may be sure that I will not cause your husband any further inconvenience than I can help. I wanted him to answer me a few questions, and I will gladly undertake to pay him for his time;" and, as I finished speaking, I laid one of my sovereigns on the table.

"Thank you kindly, sir," simultaneously exclaimed Mr. and Mrs. Blake, and the latter, turning to her husband, said upbraidingly, "Why don't you tell the gentleman that you'll answer any question he likes to ask you, Dick?"

"'Cos the gen'man knows I will," sulkily replied Dick, "that is, if I can."

"Look here, my good man," interposed Dr. Malchi, laying his hand persuasively on his arm, "neither this gentleman, nor myself, doubt the truth, or the straightforwardness of the account you have given us concerning the way in which he became an unconscious occupant of your cab. We do not suspect you"—and the doctor laughed playfully—"of being an accomplice of the mysterious stranger; we do but ask you to do your best to help us trace him."

"I will that, sir," heartily replied the man, his face clearing like magic; "but, indeed, gen'men, I've told you everything I know—fair and square."

"Is there anything more you would like to ask him?" inquired Dr. Malchi, glancing toward me.

"You did not answer the doctor's question just now," I said, after a moment's thought. "He asked you, if you remember, whether you searched the cab after I had been assisted out of it?"

"Yes, sir, I did," he readily replied, "not because, though, of any thought of foul play being to do with you; but after leaving the doctor's house I drove straight to the stables and, as I was taking the horse out, I wondered if you had left an umbrella or a stick behind you, but the cab was quite, empty. If I had found anything," he sarcastically added, "I'd have brought it to the doctor's house, and not have waited to be asked for it."

"We had better go now," I said, addressing Dr. Malchi; "it is no use asking any more futile questions."

He nodded, but did not stir from the window.

"If by chance, Blake, you should again come across the man whom I am seeking," I said very earnestly, "I want you to at once follow him; do not lose sight of him, and if you should succeed in tracking him to any house, set a watch on it, and lose no time in coming to Dr. Malchi or me, and acquainting us with your success."

"I will, sir, depend upon it," he promised, following us to the door.

"By-the-bye, doctor," I said as we halted a moment on the threshold, "the fact that the stranger—as we must for the nonce call him—wore an overcoat, although it was a summer night, and a travelling cap, seems to me to suggest that, if not worn as a partial disguise, he had lately come off a journey, and in that case——Of course I was dressed the night when first you saw me exactly as I am now?" I asked the cabman, my current of thought abruptly checked.

"Yes, sir," he answered, "except, of course, for the ——"

"Light dust overcoat you were then wearing," interrupted the doctor, with some excitement. "It is strange," he said, sinking his voice to a whisper in order that the cabman might not overhear, "that I entirely forgot your overcoat; doubtless in its pockets you will find some clue to your mysteriously forgotten identity—I am sorry, nay, I am ashamed to think that I have not remembered before, so important a clue—but all's well that ends well; you will become once more possessed of all your valuable papers and documents, and your lack of memory need distress you no longer."

"You are too sanguine, doctor," I said, as we walked, arm in arm, swiftly down the street. "You forgot that the pockets of my other garments had been carefully rifled of all their contents—save, indeed, a few sovereigns—before I entered your house. Why should the thief have passed over my outer coat?"

"Thief!" echoed the doctor significantly. "An ordinary thief, my dear fellow, never loses the opportunity of pocketing even a few sovereigns, which, by your own showing, the gentleman who hailed the cab for you was considerate

enough not to do. No; it strikes me that we shall find no common thief at the bottom of this mystery, which, as likely as not," he added gaily, "will, after an investigation of the pockets of your overcoat, turn out to be no mystery at all."

I answered somewhat absently. Every step we were taking brought us nearer Miss Latimer, and the thought made my heart beat fast with a strange, almost fierce, delight.

I would fain have postponed my examination of the coat until after we had partaken of the luncheon at which the doctor told me his adopted daughter would preside; but he would not listen to any of my timidly proffered reasons for delay.

"Nay, nay," he laughed, as we re-entered his house, "you shall not stand on ceremony with me. I know your anxiety is too great for words; we will not lose an instant in endeavouring to appease it."

He opened the door of a prettily fitted-up morning room, which I, following him rather sulkily, be it said, intuitively guessed to be chiefly devoted to Miss Latimer's use, but which was not, however, then graced with her presence, and sharply rang a silver handbell.

Directly Leah made her appearance, he closely, and with, I thought, unnecessary harshness, questioned her as to the whereabouts of my missing overcoat.

A singular look of perplexity flitted across the woman's face; she eyed her master with almost wistful anxiety, but he apparently saw it not, and she slowly quitted the room.

Dr. Malchi awaited her return with some impatience. After several moments had elapsed, and she came not, he said, with manifest irritation:

"I fear that Leah must have misunderstood me. If you will excuse me, I will go in search of her."

"I wish you would not trouble, doctor," I began; but he was out of the room before I could say more.

In an incredibly short time he re-appeared, bearing on his arm a light dust overcoat.

"It was in my study," he declared. "It has, strangely enought, been there ever since I helped take it off you the evening before last."

The sight of it only awoke in me a feeble hope. I did not expect to find so easily the clue of my forgotten past.

"By the way," remarked my host, as he watched me commence my examinations, "you wore a white rose in the button-hole of this coat on that memorable evening."

I suddenly desisted in my search. "Did—was that rose afterwards placed in a vase by my bedside?" I breathlessly asked.

"I hardly know," he replied, smiling at my eagerness; "it may have been. If so, Regina doubtless placed it there; she and Leah prepared the chamber for you."

"Then Miss Latimer saw me while I was unconscious of her presence?" I naturally inquired.

"Yes, just for a moment," he answered, rather impatiently; "but, my dear fellow, proceed—proceed, I pray you, with your search."

I obeyed, turning out the pockets one by one. There were four in all—two side pockets, one outer breast, and one inner breast pocket. The two first were entirely empty, in the third—the outer breast one—was an unmarked white silk handkerchief. I paused a second before I searched the inner and last one.

"You are, I fear, a false prophet, doctor," I laughed; "I am destined to yet remain in my present ignorance."

He frowned slightly at my levity (which was directly due to the thought that the completion of my task would send me into Miss Latimer's presence), and motioned me to search the last pocket.

Directly I placed my hand inside it, my fingers closed over a folded paper. I drew it out with breathless excitement, and, tremblingly unfolding it, discovered it to be a bank deposit receipt for twenty thousand pounds.

The doctor, in his friendly interest, had leaned over my shoulder and read the printed official notice at the same time as I had.

"Verily, I prophesied truly!" he exultantly cried. "Here in one moment have you regained your name and address and twenty thousand pounds!"

The letters swam before my eyes, and my breath came short and fast.

"Tell me doctor," I panted, "tell me what my name is?"

Dr. Malchi took the bank receipt from my shaking fingers, and, with responsive excitement, scanned the first few words.

"Your name," he answered almost solemnly, "is Clive Culverwell Tempest."

CHAPTER VI.

MY INVESTIGATIONS RECEIVE A CHECK.

THE doctor and I read and re-read the bank receipt. It was but a bald statement of fact, and yet it contained for me a fairy mine of information. I gazed at it with entranced eyes, and then the doctor's voice suddenly dispelled my ecstatic dreams.

"Your lost memory has returned to you, of course?" he smiled questioningly. "All is now made clear."

I shook my head sadly. "If Clive Culverwell Tempest be indeed my name, it has no power to evoke my lost recollections. It might as well be my new name for my new existence."

"The address—Queen's Hotel, Westminster—is then equally powerless?" sympathetically asked my host.

I threw out my hands with a gesture of despair. "My life begins from yesterday," I passionately exclaimed. "Ask me no questions which date further back, for I cannot answer them. I am newly born to existence again."

"The bank officials, and the manager of the hotel, may give you your desired information, though," very thoughtfully observed Dr. Malchi. "We can, at all events, question them; but we must proceed very deliberately to work. They must not get an inkling of the true nature of the case, for what would be the immediate consequences? The bank authorities would deem you either a madman or an imposter, and refuse to hand over to you a single shilling of your own money; or the manager of the hotel, if cognisant of the whereabouts of any relatives or friends of your own, would straightway communicate with them, and if, when confronted with them, you recognised them not—as the probabilities are you would not—what would they do with you? What would the world—this sceptical, practical, common-sense world—say they ought to do with you?" and the doctor paused, and allowed his eyes to rest pityingly upon me.

I shuddered. "All that you say is true," I acknowledged brokenly; "but I am not mad; I am sane—perfectly sane."

"I know you are," he said simply; "but were I to tell the world so, I should in my turn be called mad. What is the opinion of one man against many? I should not even be listened to."

I was silent for a few moments. "Advise me, doctor," I said at last, very earnestly; "I place myself entirely in your hands."

"Very well, I accept the charge," he said, with a grave smile. "Now we will go into luncheon, and I will endeavour to make up my mind concerning our wisest course of action."

Miss Latimer was waiting for us in the next room. Her bow was as cold as ever, but a softer light burned in her beautiful eyes, and her lovely mouth, I fancied, had lost some of its haughty curves. I partially forgot my recent excitement in the intoxication of her presence. She did not allude to my mysterious loss of memory in any way, neither did Dr. Malchi touch upon any matter purely affecting me before her. Once, when he called me by my name, I saw a strange, half sad smile flit across her face, but she made no verbal comment.

"We shall be back to dinner, Regina," said the doctor, as he rose from the table; "Mr. Tempest and myself have business to transact this afternoon, but it will not detain us longer."

She bent her head with the old haughty gesture which I was already beginning to love so well.

"I fear that I am unconscionably encroaching upon your time and friendship, doctor," I said, turning my eyes reluctantly away from the contemplation of Miss Latimer. "What will your patients say to me?" I laughingly added.

"I have given myself a holiday to-day," he replied, "I have handed my few patients over to the care of a medical friend, so for to-day, only, I am entirely at your service."

He left the room before I could say more, but I lingered behind, and half in jest, and half in earnest, said, "Wish me luck, Miss Latimer, ere I set out on a real voyage of discovery. I am about to——"

"Tell me all this evening," she interposed. "Dr. Malchi will be waiting for you almost directly; I would rather wait to hear your day's adventures presently."

"I learned one delightful fact this morning, at any rate," I said, glad of the smallest excuse for prolonging the unexpected *tête-à-tête.*

"And that?" she asked, her lips parting slightly.

"Was that you, in your sweet compassion, saw and doubtless helped tend me, an unconscious stranger, on the evening I was all unwittingly brought into this house."

A delicious blush stole into her cheeks, and her eyes drooped shyly. "Did Dr. Malchi tell you that?" she murmured. "I saw you; but," and she raised her eyes almost defiantly, "you need not thank me for my help or sympathy; I bestowed neither upon you, then."

"Did you not save me one poor relic of my past?" I smilingly asked. "See," and I opened my pocket-book, and showed her my cherished rose-leaves, "I know not what tender association the rose, which these poor petals represent, once possessed for me; but the knowledge that it once won even a single thought from you will henceforth make them doubly dear to me."

To my surprise she angrily waved the pocket-book aside. "I will not, even in an idle compliment, be linked with the unknown giver of your rose, sir," she said, almost passionately.

"I beg your pardon most humbly," I exclaimed, truly mystified at the displeasure I had so unexpectedly evoked. "I will never again" (if I can help it, I mentally excepted) "offend you."

She did not speak, but with knit brows watched me as I thrust the book into my pocket again.

"Am I not forgiven yet, Miss Latimer?" I ventured presently to ask.

Her eyes and lips smiled, greatly to my relief. "Yes; but if you really care to please me," she said, very softly "you will throw your worthless rose-leaves away. I do not covet any connection—be it ever so slight—with an unknown stranger."

I felt remarkably reluctant to obey her, and yet, five minutes before, I would have flown to have done her slightest bidding, and, in addition, have esteemed myself the most honoured of all men in being allowed to serve her; but now I hesitated, and strove in vain to find a way out of the difficulty.

If only she had asked me to do anything else, I thought miserably, and yet, why should I prize a few wretched rose-leaves more than the smile which I knew would reward my sacrifice?—for a sacrific I dumbly, but none the less acutely, felt it to be. My hand irresolutely felt for the pocket-book, but in the self-same moment Dr. Malchi re-entered the room, and I—amazing as the idea would have been to me at any other time—regarded his entry as a welcome interruption.

"I want to speak to you one moment," he said, drawing me aside to the window. "I think it better for you and I to go without any loss of time to the bank and establish your claim to the money there awaiting you—I beg your pardon, but are you listening?"

"Yes," I guiltily stammered, my eyes wistfully following Miss Latimer out of the room.

"The bank officials," he proceeded, "will not ask you any awkward questions—doubtless they will recognise you; be on your guard; show no surprise or nervousness; act and speak easily. Stop; I have not finished yet. You had better draw out a small sum of money in order to have a motive for your visit. Directly you leave the bank, I will enter it. I am slightly acquainted with the manager, and in the course of an apparently idle conversation, I will ask him if he knows you, and obtain from him all the particulars I can glean respecting yourself."

"You lay me under fresh obligations every moment, doctor," I warmly replied. "I will at once promise to implicitly follow your very excellent suggestions."

"Very well," he said; "you must, then, prepare to set out with me almost immediately."

I did not see Miss Latimer again, and consequently left the house with the doctor, feeling depressed in spirits, and inclined to take a less sanguine view of a successful issue to our errand than did my companion.

I entered the bank alone, as previously agreed upon, and, after purchasing a cheque-book, filled in one of the forms for a hundred pounds, and handed it without a word to the cashier. I must confess that my heart beat quickly enough after so doing. For aught I knew I might have forged a name not my own. Had the doctor, I wondered—although I was ashamed the next moment of the thought—prudently

refrained from being seen in my company until the question of my legal right to the signature was settled beyond any doubt?

"How will you take it, sir?" asked the cashier, glancing from the cheque towards me.

I hardly knew what I answered. I was truly Clive Culverwell Tempest, but did ever man before so strangely lose and regain his own name?

The doctor, true to his promise, entered the bank a moment after I had left its threshold, and I, staring into a shop window close by, patiently awaited his re-appearance.

After some little time he came out again, and I could see by his face that he brought me good news.

"So far, very good, my dear fellow," he said, as we strolled away from the bank. "My friend—Mr. Payne—told me in strict confidence all he knows of you, which, if not much, is eminently satisfactory. A month ago you—a stranger to all the bank officials—deposited with them the sum of twenty thousand pounds. They (but, of course, it was only a surmise on their part) supposed you to have recently returned from abroad, as you announced your intention of seeking without unnecessary delay a safe investment for the money entrusted to their care. The only address you gave them was Queen's Hotel, Westminster."

"We had better go to the hotel and question the manager,' I said, after brief but anxious consideration.

The doctor at once signified his readiness to accompany me, and, hailing a hansom, we proceeded without loss of time to Westminster. We parted at the door of the hotel, and the doctor entered alone to make the preliminary inquiries. Quite an hour elapsed ere he—very grave of countenance, though, this time—again rejoined me.

"I have seen the proprietor," he said, without waiting to be questioned, "and he has given me all the information he can respecting you. On the 4th of last June you drove from Charing Cross to his hotel, and engaged rooms. You were alone, but frequently visited by a gentleman of apparently your own age——"

"Who in the name of wonder was he?" I ejaculated.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders and continued: "On the morning of the day when you were so strangely brought to

my house, you paid your bill, and left the hotel on foot, saying that your luggage would be sent for in the course of an hour or two, which was accordingly done. The man could tell me no more, neither could any of the hotel employés whom I briefly cross-examined."

"But the luggage—could we not trace the person who received orders to fetch it from the hotel?" I eagerly asked.

The doctor shook his head. "I fear not. He was a porter unknown to any of the hall waiters."

"My clue, then, is abruptly broken off," I remarked, after we had walked the length of the street in silence; "save that I have regained my name" ("and twenty thousand pounds," pleasantly interpolated Dr. Malchi), "I am not much wiser than I was before."

My companion meditatively lit a cigar as we turned our steps homeward again.

"Why not cheerfully accept the inevitable?" he asked, quite suddenly. "Why not be content with the present and the future? Why seek any more to disinter a buried past? You have youth, good looks—nay, you need not colour up, my dear fellow—and last, but by no means least, you have a handsome sum of money lying at your bankers. Why not, then, take the goods the gods provide and be content?"

"You can afford to be philosophical, doctor," I replied, half piqued. "You are not a walking mystery to yourself; you are not a mental phenomenon; you are not newly born again; you are not a man and yet a babe at one and the same moment—Good heavens!" I broke off abruptly, "if my educational memory had collapsed as entirely as my personal one has, I actually should now be ignorant of the letters of the alphabet. I must have gone to school again." I could only shudder and leave unuttered my terribly ludicrous train of thought.

Dr. Malchi softly laughed. "Why torment yourself about what is, after all, only a trivial misfortune?" he remonstrated. "A strange thing has happened to you, but it is only strange because, so far as you know, your experience is a solitary one. Let the cause of it once be discovered, and the effect ceases any longer to be remarkable. Why make yourself miserable over your failure of memory? Your present position gives you an almost incalculable advantage over

other men. All things are possible to you. You can view your future, undeterred by any thought of your past. You can dedicate all your energies, all your ambitions to the present, now within your grasp. I would give ten, aye, twenty years of my life," and the doctor's voice was tremulous in its earnestness, "if I could but possess your opportunities. I would, by reason of that very blank of personal recollections, which you so heartily deplore, rise superior to all adverse forces. I would conquer the world. My future should be my god."

He checked himself abruptly. One or two of the passers-by turned and gazed curiously after us, as if wondering what formed the theme of our engrossing conversation. I remained silent. I was disturbed by his persuasive arguments, but not yet convinced of their absoluteness.

Miss Latimer and I met at dinner, and, greatly to my secret relief, she had apparently quite forgotten the episode of the rose-leaves. She seemed to have laid aside her haughty reserve and resolved instead to dazzle me with her sweet condescension. Her beauty enslaved me. She was no longer a living statue, but a woman to be loved, and who —and the thought quickened into life a thousand bewildering and rapturous emotions—could love in return.

The doctor withdrew into his study almost immediately dinner was ended, and I timidly followed Miss Latimer into the drawing-room. She sank at once into a low *fauteuil* by the French window, which opened out upon a flower-wreathed balcony, and motioned me, with a pretty imperious gesture, to take a seat near her.

"Now tell me your morning's adventures," she commanded.

I gazed lovingly upon her before I commenced my recital. She made indeed a fair picture. Her coronal of dark hair and lovely, expressive face found a fitting background in the olive velvet cushion on which she leaned, whilst her soft draperies of golden silk gleamed like sunshine around her.

After I had finished my narrative she allowed her eyes to rest half dreamily upon me for a moment before she said, with uncharacteristic abruptness:

"Why seek to discover the forgotten past? Why not be content with the future? Nay, smile not at me. I know

I advised you differently last evening, but I have thought your case well over since then, and I have regretted the advice I gave you."

"But——" I began, very hesitatingly.

"Do not interrupt me," she said, leaning forward with almost pleading earnestness. "Your present ignorance may be in itself a boon greatly to be desired. You are free, free as air," and she threw out her hands with almost a gesture of envy. "You can begin life again untrammelled by even a recollection of the past. You are young, and able to enjoy to the fullest every happiness the future holds for you. Oh, be wise; let the forgotten past go, think not of it with even a passing shadow of regret. Date your existence from yesterday, and let the present and the future atone for the dead past."

"If I make no further efforts to discover my lost identity," I asked in trembling excitement, "if I contentedly accept my new existence, and trouble myself no longer about my old, will you be my friend, my adviser, my guide?"

"I will," she said, with tender solemnity.

"I care nothing for the recollection of a past life unassociated with you," I said recklessly. "You—you alone——"

"Hush!" she said, in quick rebuke. "You know not what you are saying; your words are wild—I will not listen to them."

Feeling deservedly chidden, I tried to stammer an apology, but she—engrossed in her own thoughts—hardly seemed to hear me. After a little while she looked across at me with a friendly smile.

"I have been thinking of my own past," she frankly admitted, "and wishing that I could forget a record of sorrow and tears, which are all I can remember of my childhood. Have you any curiosity concerning the past history of the woman known to the world as Dr. Malchi's adopted daughter?"

My eager face answered her. I leaned forward and listened with bated breath, as she, waving her fan slowly to and fro, briefly told me her own story.

CHAPTER VII.

A STORY OF A CHILDHOOD.

"TWENTY years ago a woman, with a child between two and three years old in her arms, committed suicide from one of the London bridges. A commonplace incident enough, you will say, only a little less commonplace twenty years ago than it is to-day. Some man, who had witnessed the woman's desperate act, sprang into the water after her, but only succeeded in rescuing the child. The woman's body was never recovered. The child was sent to a foundling hospital, and, a twelvemonth later, was adopted by a rich and childless lady and gentleman. The child's benefactors died, however, long before she reached womanhood; and, as no provision for her future had been made, she was once more sent to a charitable institution, the latter being this time a school, whose patrons fed, clothed, and educated orphan and utterly penniless girls.

"Can you imagine all that sudden change from luxury to galling dependence would imply to a naturally sensitive and high-spirited child? I was wretched—completely, hopelessly wretched," continued Miss Latimer, suddenly abandoning the third for the singular person. "I loathed the dull, monotonous routine of school duties. I almost hated the memory of my so-called benefactors, who, after making me their plaything for a few careless, sunny years, had let me drift back again to the miserable bondage of dependence, from which they had once idly plucked me. I hated my unknown mother. I could, child as I was, have cursed her for giving me birth. My very name, Regina, which I had years before at the foundling hospital clung to as my own, was now made into a term of mockery by scornful lips. I, a queen indeed! I, the twice forsaken child, who had inherited naught but shame and contempt! My school companions were, without exception, children of respectable parents. They all had relatives or friends who, on appointed days, visited and caressed them. I had none. I held myself aloof from teachers and from elder girls alike. I scorned their veiled

compassion almost more than I did their openly expressed contempt. I longed—oh, how I longed!—to be a woman. I knew that, in features as well as in character, I was different to my school-mates. Visitors to the institution would always point at me and whisper to each other. I cared nothing for the condemning shake of the head which invariably followed the whisper. I knew that I was beautiful, and I gloried in the fact. My beauty should, I thought, vaingloriously enough, win me favour and riches in the future. Through it I would become powerful enough to give back scorn for scorn to all who then dared taunt me with my nameless origin. I would—but I will not linger longer over this portion of my miseroble story. My emancipation from my hated condition came when I was on the brink of womanhood. Dr. Malchi visited the school one day, and, in an interview with the head mistress, stated that, in consequence of a legacy recently left me by my dead unknown father, a friend of Dr. Malchi's, he, the latter, had, after considerable difficulty, succeeded in tracing me, and was desirous of at once commencing his guardianship. The school authorities, of course, offered no kind of opposition, and he took me away with him that same day, and engaged private teachers to complete my education. He has been kind to me, but——"

"You do not like him?" I said, after waiting in vain for her to complete her last sentence.

She looked quickly at me. "Say, rather," she corrected, "that I do not understand him."

After a moment or two she said, in brief conclusion of her story:

"I never asked Dr. Malchi to tell me aught of my parentage, neither has he ever volunteered to do so. He may, perhaps, when he ceases to be my guardian, which will be on my twenty-fifth birthday, and I can wait. I need not hurry by so much as one hour the telling of that story. I can guess only too well its sorrow and its—shame."

Her beautiful head drooped low as she whispered the last word, and tears sparkled on the long lashes which shaded her flushed cheeks.

I impetuously rose from my chair, and bending over her, poessed fervent kisses on the hands lying idle in her lap.

"Regina, my queen," I murmured, passionately, "share my future with me, and let it atone for the unhappiness of your past. We will together begin a new life. Out of darkness has my soul been brought to you—let your love be my guiding star."

She drew her hands out of my eager grasp, and smiled, half sadly, half tenderly.

"You know not whether you are free to love me," she said, very softly. "Perhaps——"

"Regina, I love you—you alone of all the world," I declared, striving with a mighty effort to steady my voice. "I glory in the fact that I have forgotten my past existence, since as you, dear one, have shown that existence was totally unconnected with you. I care not what lies behind me. I will henceforth think only—plan only—for the future. I am content to let go all memories wherein you have no part. I bless my forgetfulness since it has strangely severed all bonds which might have demanded even a thought unassociated with you. Regina, I love you—I love you," and my voice, in my intense emotion, sank to a tremulous whisper.

She laid her hand on my arm, and looked at me very intently.

"I love you, too," she slowly replied, "but I warn you I am of a very jealous nature. I have never loved until now. Think of it; you have all the love of my life. Never, never before have I bestowed as much as one kindly thought upon any man or woman. You alone have my love, and it will prove a curse to you."

"My darling," I cried, encircling her slender waist with my arm, "your love will bless me—none will ever know how richly. You, my queen, will reign supreme in my heart and life. I will henceforth live only for you—your love has baptised me in my new existence."

She suddenly thrust away my arm, and, rising to her feet, faced me with swift and uncontrollable agitation.

"Go," she said, pointing to the door, "go while yet you have time; go and return no more. I love you too dearly to harm you, and my love will—can only—blight your life. Go, and remember me only as a woman who loved you, and yet saved you from herself."

Her bosom heaved tumultuously, and her form was shaken with her own vehemence.

"Go, go," she panted again.

"And leave you now that you have acknowledged your love for me?" I exultantly asked. "Why, my darling, you are already coquetting with me."

Her hand dropped to her side, and she passively allowed me to fondle it again.

"Will you love me always, I wonder?" she presently half-musingly said, her eyes meanwhile scanning my face with an anxiety which was painful in its intensity; "if not, better for us to part now than—then."

I laughed aloud in my joyousness of heart.

'Love you always?—aye, darling, my love shall defy death itself. You are mine, mine only, now and for all eternity."

"And you will be content to remain forgetful of the past?" she asked, after a short but infinitely blissful silence. "You will live only for the present?"

"And the thought of the future, sweetheart," I whispered, "the happy future which lies waiting for us."

She suddenly shuddered from head to foot. "Some one is walking over my grave, as the old women say," she remarked, with a faint smile; "shall I take it as an augury of what awaits me in that future which you are trying to forecast?"

My answer need not be recorded. It was a fond and foolish one, but it brought the love-light back into her dark eyes, and caused a smile to linger again on her sweet lips.

As for myself, I was intensely and entirely happy. If I could, I would not have remembered the events of my past life. I could date every hope, every happiness, from my first meeting with Regina Latimer, and I would not have had it otherwise. Her love blessed me in my new existence; what cared I for the forgotten joys and sorrows which lurked in my past?

Before retiring to rest that night, I acquainted Dr. Malchi with my determination to accept the present and totally ignore the past.

"I verily and entirely," I concluded with emphasis, "date my existence from the morning I awoke under your roof.

I will cast no more longing backward glances. The present and the future shall amply content me."

"Are you not making a virtue of necessity?" he asked, by way of a smiling answer. "Can you do aught but accept your position? Have not your clues, one by one, failed to re-establish your lost identity?"

"If I had not changed my mind concerning that last-named endeavour," I answered steadily, "my want of success so far should not daunt me; it would rather nerve me to fresh exertions, but since I have become converted to your view of my condition——"

"Ah!—converted. By me or by Miss Latimer, may I ask?" blandly inquired my host.

I flushed, but answered boldly:

"By Miss Latimer. She told me of her own unhappy childhood, and——"

"Just so, just so," he interrupted. "Well, since you have changed your views, what then?"

"Why, I intend to fully enjoy the present and hopefully regard the future," I declared.

"Amen to that determination," cried the doctor, with hardly repressed satisfaction, as we parted for the night.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGE CONTENTMENT.

And now I abandoned myself to my new life with a strange contentment. Weeks went by, and the calm tenor of my new existence remained undisturbed by even a ripple of regret concerning my forgotten past. I was perfectly happy. I made new friends for myself from amongst the people introduced to me by Dr. Malchi. I even commenced studying, in a desultory manner, the medical profession, under, of course, his guidance and assistance.

I still remained beneath his roof, but, by my own strong desire, I handed to Leah every month a sum of money which

I considered would amply defray my expenses in the household. I do not think Regina knew of the last-mentioned arrangement. The doctor had only, after my repeated solicitations, tacitly permitted it; but I rightly felt that money was powerless to lessen the debt of obligation I owed him. He had not, indeed, consented in words to any recognised engagement between Miss Latimer and myself; but he had listened with a smile to my confession, and had laid no embargo on my love-suit.

I lived only for Regina, and she—ah! she lived only for me. Her haughty reserve had entirely given place to a sweet, new-born shyness. She seemed sometimes afraid of letting me know how dearly she loved me; but I could read the depth and intensity of that love in every tell-tale glance of her eyes, and in every soft inflection of her low, thrilling voice.

At the doctor's advice, I had invested my money in various securities recommended to me by him, and although I was not what the world would deem a very rich man, still I was able to anticipate the providing of a fairly luxurious home for my future wife.

I must confess, though, that Regina puzzled me at times. She had strange fits of depression, which would not yield even to all my fond banter, and these fits were invariably succeeded by an unnatural and feverish gaiety of speech and manner. She, I repeat, puzzled me, but her very unlikeness to other women only made me love her the more.

Dr. Malchi and I, as time went on, became very good friends. He would occasionally, over a cigar, give me glimpses of his past life. I cannot, perhaps, do better than relate in this chapter the little I thus learned concerning my host's history. I must, however, first premise that such glimpses — interesting though they were to me — were rendered more so by the consciousness that what the doctor omitted, or passed carelessly over, would, if told, have been fraught with a strange and enthralling importance.

"I was born of a nearly black father, and a white mother," said the doctor one evening, as we sat chatting together, long after Regina had retired to rest, "and hence my strange anomaly of features and complexion. My mother was the only child of an English missionary, stationed for many years

at Port Elizabeth, South Africa. She was educated in England, but directly her education was supposed to be completed, she was sent out to join her father, who had a few months before become a widower. She was but a weak-minded, highly romantic school-girl, and on the voyage out she conceived an extraordinary and perfectly inexplicable attachment to the third mate, a mulatto. He was, as you may guess, a wholly uneducated man, but he possessed great strength of will, and could, when he chose, so sundry persons said, and after events proved, exert an almost incalculable influence upon the mind of any person of weaker calibre than his own. He certainly influenced my mother to a marked extent, inasmuch as he won her consent to be secretly married to him at a port the ship chanced, for some reason, to stay at a couple of days before proceeding to Port Elizabeth. Not many hours after the hasty ceremony, the man whom I have the misfortune to call my father discovered, through a passenger, whose home was at Port Elizabeth, that his wife's father, the missionary, was not nearly so wealthy a man as she—whether purposely or not I know not—had led him to believe. Feeling himself deceived, he immediately vented his disappointment upon his newly-made wife.

Here Dr. Malchi paused, and meditatively puffed away at his cigar before resuming his narrative, and when he did so a singular vindictiveness had crept into his voice.

"My mother quickly repented her marriage. Before the ship had reached its destination she had grown to intensely fear the man she had so hastily wedded, and when she reached her father's house her first action was to fall on her knees and entreat him not only to forgive her marriage, but to free her, if he possibly could, from her husband. The father and the captain of the ship held a hurried consultation, but before they could take any legal steps to question the validity of the marriage my—well—somewhat premature appearance on the stage of life frustrated all their projects. As it turned out, however, my father seemed content to leave his wife in peace. He gave up the sea, and, with companions more or less disreputable, settled down in the near vicinity of Port Elizabeth.

"He gambled and drank his days away, and only recalled himself to my mother's memory when the money which she

at the risk of reducing herself and her aged father to penury, supplied him with threatened to fall short. In my fifth year he was wanted by the police. He had, in a drunken brawl, fatally stabbed a white man, the proprietor of one of the gambling hells. Well, to make a long story short, he was, after some considerable difficulty, apprehended, and sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude. Directly my mother heard of the sentence passed upon him, she thanked heaven for it, and breathed freely for the first time since her marriage. Poor woman! she verily knew him to be a devil in soul as well as in features."

Dr. Malchi paused again, and daintily flicked the ash from his cigar.

"Nine years passed away," he presently resumed, after a glance at my interested face, "and then my grandfather died. The day after his funeral my mother began making her preparations to return to England. The week before the ship sailed in which she had engaged berths for herself and me, I noticed a singular change come over her. She trembled at an unexpected footstep, and almost swooned at the sight of a stranger. I intuitively guessed that she had heard something of or from the man whom, even to myself, I hated to call my father, and I guessed rightly.

"Awaking suddenly one night, I heard a murmur of subdued voices in the room usually occupied by my mother. I was a sharp-witted lad enough, and I determined to see for myself who her mysterious midnight visitor was. I crept noiselessly to the threshold of the door, and, hiding behind the curtain which was drawn between it and the interior of the room, I saw and overheard everything.

"The visitor was, indeed, my father. I can almost fancy that I see him now. He was ravenously devouring some food which apparently my mother had just fetched for him. He was terribly emaciated; he looked like a man on the very verge of starvation. He tore the food with his teeth, and snarled with satisfaction. Ugh, it was a horrid sight! His clothing, I noticed, was reduced to the veriest rags, and his naked feet were swollen and bleeding. He—my father! My heart throbbed almost to suffocation. I would kill myself, I thought, passionately, sooner than acknowledge that I owed my being to him. Presently he began to speak. I

listened intently to all he said, and ere I stole back again to my bed, I had learned that he had escaped from prison, and that men had hunted him almost to my mother's door. A price was set on his head, and his sole hope of escape lay in the aid he expected to obtain from my mother. He had rapidly sketched out his plans. She was to supply him with all the money she could possibly realise. Not only was she to sell her scant possessions, but our passage money to England was, by his command, to be handed over to him also. She was to have clothes which would serve him for a disguise, and other necessaries, ready for him by the next night, when he, after lying in some secret hiding-place all day, could be again silently admitted into her room. He, last of all, announced his intention of taking me away with him in order to facilitate his own escape.

"'A gentleman travelling with his son will not be easily identified with a runaway convict,' he said, with a malicious smile, 'and as for the rest, the boy will be useful to me in a hundred ways. If he inherits his father's cleverness he may, if he escapes the gallows, die a rich man.'"

"I will do my mother the justice to say that she endeavoured, by her tears and prayers, to dissuade him from taking me from her; but he was inflexible, and she, yielding, as she had always done, to his stronger will, consented at last that I should accompany him. He arranged to wake me out of my sleep on the following night, and terrify me into implicitly obeying his directions, my mother promising, until then, to keep me in entire ignorance of his visit and demands.

"I have wondered since," said the doctor musingly, "whether my mother might not at the last moment have found courage enough to have saved me from my father and the fate which threatened me, but doubtless she would not. She was but a frightened weak woman, and although she loved me, after her fashion, yet she feared her husband far more. She kept her promise, and all through the next day showed no sign of any alteration in her plans. She concluded the last of the business arrangements supposed to be preparatory to our departure for England, and she several times when alone with me alluded to our imaginary forthcoming journey. I kept my eyes resolutely turned away from her. I feared lest she should read in them the contempt I felt for

her. Perhaps I judged her harder than she deserved; but I despised the cowardice which I instinctively knew was the motive power of her intended surrender of her only child. In the afternoon, I, under the pretence of bidding some acquaintances farewell, transacted a little business on my own account. That done, I returned home, and at my usual hour retired to rest. But I could not sleep. I lay intently listening and waiting. Almost sooner than I expected my door was softly opened, and a harsh voice bade me get up and dress myself. I, successfully simulating natural childish terror both of my visitor and his command, at once obeyed him and followed him into the adjoining room, where my mother, feebly weeping, awaited me. She tried to kiss me, but I pushed her away from me—winning thereby an approving smile from my father, who straightway swore that, in spite of my white skin, I was verily his own son. He wore as a disguise a clerical suit of my grandfather's, and in the sleek broadcloth and wide-rimmed hat looked exactly like one of the coloured missionaries which at that time were frequently located at Port Elizabeth. My mother gave him the money he had demanded, and after he had carefully concealed it about his person he ordered me to noiselessly follow him out of the house. I had been waiting for that moment. Hardly were the words out of his mouth than I whistled sharply, and six men, who had lain concealed in the long grass outside the window, rushed in and claimed him as their prisoner. I had given information to the authorities that afternoon, and I had delivered my father into the hands of his captors. That was the little business I had transacted on my own account.

"But, after all, I was cheated out of my just revenge," concluded Dr. Malchi, pleasantly smiling across at me; "for my father, before he could be prevented, drew a loaded revolver out of his pocket, and, shooting himself through the heart, fell dead at my feet. I was denied the satisfaction of seeing him taken back to his cell in the convict prison. My mother was carried insensible out of the room, and, although she partially recovered from the shock she had sustained that night, she died not many months afterwards."

This was one of the backward glimpses the doctor showed me of his past life. There were others but he only outlined

many of the strange and exciting incidents in them. I gradually gathered, however, that he had spent long years in various foreign countries. He had penetrated into the interior of Africa. He had ridden alone through terrible Indian jungles. He had made his way on his sleigh over vast Russian plains of snow. He had, at some time or other, lived in nearly all the gay capitals of Europe. He touched but slightly on his guardianship of Regina, and I, wholly satisfied with her own sweet self, asked him no questions concerning her parentage.

CHAPTER IX.

MY VISITOR.

ONE day, when I was dressing for dinner, Leah—who, by-the-bye, was Dr. Malchi's sole indoor servant—knocked at my door, and, by means of her slate, acquainted me with the fact that a man was waiting to see me in the room the doctor had kindly allotted to me for my private use.

I, wondering very much who my unexpected visitor could be, and what his business was with me, descended, and immediately recognised him to be the cabman—Blake—who had driven me in my unconscious condition to Dr. Malchi's residence.

At the sight of him a strange feeling took possession of me. I dreaded his first words. Perhaps he had come to tell me he had made some discovery which, if I followed it up, might separate me from Regina. I tried in vain to reason myself out of my foolish foreboding, but not until the man had greeted me with a lugubrious shake of the head did I succeed in banishing it.

"I thought I'd jest look round to tell you, sir," he began, "that I'm keeping a sharp look-out, but I can't—leastways, not exactly—say that I've found the gent which you and I are a-wanting to find."

"Sit down, my good man," I said, "I—I think that

perhaps, after all, I was mistaken in supposing that I met with any foul play on the night you are alluding to. I have since had reason to believe that my illness was a natural one. I was not robbed, although I easily might have been, not only of the money about my person, but of a valuable paper which I afterwards discovered to be quite safe in one of the pockets of my outer coat."

"You don't say so, sir!" he remarked, staring fixedly at me and breathing very hard. "Well, now, I'm right down glad to hear that your illness turns out to be a natural one; but if my opinion had been asked, I should have called it a werry unnatural one," and he laughed ponderously at his own wit.

"I am none the less obliged to you though," I added, "for doing all you could to——"

"But, dang me, sir, if I quite understand," he interrupted. "If you was only took ill in an ord'nary way like, how do you account for the stranger who put you in my cab?"

"Why you have accounted for him yourself,' I said, laughing. "He was some charitable gentleman, who, observing that I was evidently ill, hailed a cab and was good enough to assist me into it. He doubtless thought that I should be sufficiently recovered when you arrived at S—— Square to give you more explicit directions."

Blake passed his hand thoughtfully across his stubbly chin two or three times before he said, very slowly:

"Well, all I can say is that the gent must have been a rum un to put a sick man into a cab, and walk right away and never speak a word to the driver concerning his fare. Perhaps, though," and Blake's face brightened suddenly, "he feared he might be called upon to pay for the journey. Eh? maybe I've hit the right nail on the head now, sir?"

"More likely he did not care to be mixed up further in the affairs of a stranger," I said lightly. "Anyhow, I was not robbed, neither was I harmed very seriously." (I mentally wondered what the cabman would have said if I had informed him of my extraordinary loss of personal recollections.) "So I can afford to remember my good Samaritan with profound gratitude."

Blake twisted the brim of his hat uneasily between his hands. He seemed anxious, and yet strangely reluctant, to

unburden his mind of some weighty supposition which he had himself formed concerning my case.

"I don't go for to deny, sir," he said presently, with a sudden burst of confidence, "that the unknown gent might not have acted fair and square toward you. In course, you ought to be the best judge. You was not robbed, you say. Well, then, certainly the unknown gent was no common thief, but——"

"I tell you," I interrupted, rather sternly, "that I am quite satisfied that the gentleman, whoever he was, was prompted only by a feeling of compassion to assist a helpless stranger, and was in no way responsible for my illness."

"Then you don't want me to try and find him for you, sir?" he questioned, still fidgetting with his hat.

I laughed. "I should be glad to personally thank him for his kindness," I replied; "but as he has probably forgotten all about me, I do not think you need give yourself any more trouble in the matter. I shall, although he may never know it, always remember him with gratitude."

"Then I may as well say good evening, sir," said Blake backing towards the door.

"Stay a moment," I said. "Here are a couple of sovereigns for you and one for Mrs. Blake. You are an honest fellow, and I'm obliged to you, as well as to the unknown stranger, for your past exertions on my behalf."

"I thank you kindly, sir," said the man; "but I hope you don't think I came on a make-believe errand to-night, nor that I wanted you to give me money which I've never earned. I'll just tell you, sir, what caused me to pay this here visit."

'Well, what was it?" I impatiently asked, glancing at my watch. Regina would, I knew, be wondering at my delay.

"After you left me, sir, that morning," he began, with irritating slowness, "I puzzled and puzzled my head trying to remember more particularly the appearance of the gen'man who hailed the cab for you, but I couldn't; and, strange to say, the more I tried to remember, the more puzzled I became. You needn't laugh, sir; it's gospel truth; but when I got home that same night, and was quietly sitting down by the fire thinking, my puzzlement seemed suddenly removed, and I saw the stranger's face plainly before me. Immediately

the notion which, almost without my being aware of it, had been in my mind all along, got clearer and clearer, and I could, without any difficulty, trace back the likeness which been haunting me all day."

"Well," I questioned, with but thinly-veiled indifference, "whom did the mysterious stranger resemble?"

The cabman laid a finger on my arm, the better to emphasise his words, as he hoarsely whispered, "DR. MALCHI, sir."

CHAPTER X.

NARCISSA WESTMORELAND.

I STARED at the cabman in amazement; surely he or I must be dreaming.

"Dr. Malchi! Why, man," I ejaculated, "you cannot know what you are saying."

"I don't expect you to believe me," he returned, half defiantly; "but as true as there's a heaven above us, I feel sure that the man who hailed my cab was Dr. Malchi, and no one else, sir."

I laughed aloud. "Your assertion is preposterous—perfectly preposterous," I said, indignantly. "Dr. Malchi never set eyes upon me until the police inspector asked him to advise him concerning me. Your imagination has run away with you, and caused you to take an unwarrantable liberty with the name of my esteemed friend, Dr. Malchi."

"Sir, I can't help it if it riles you; but, indeed—indeed," earnestly reiterated the cabman, "I've only said what I firmly believe to be the truth. Dr. Malchi is a very uncommon-looking gen'man."

"Very," I sarcastically remarked. "So uncommon looking, in fact, that if he had really been the man who hailed your cab, you certainly would not have forgotten and remembered him again so easily."

"S'help me, sir, I'm telling you no lie," he rejoined, "but

the night he—well, the gen'man, if you'd rather I said—hailed me, he (I forgot to mention it before) wore a silk muffler loosely wrapped about his throat, which hid the lower part of his face, and his cap was drawed rather low over his forehead; but, sir, when Dr. Malchi came to my house that morning, I was, somehow or other, reminded all the time through him of the man who you were asking me to try and find for you. When Dr. Malchi asked me if I should recognise the stranger's voice again I was sorely puzzled what to say, for the doctor's own voice reminded me of his; but it was not until many hours afterwards that I guessed——"

"Hush! I will hear no more," I said, authoritatively. "Your own imagination is responsible for the supposed likeness. Dr. Malchi and I met for the first time when you and the police inspector summoned him to your aid. If he had been the kindly stranger who placed me in your cab, would he not have at once said so? What motive would he have had for concealing the fact? No, my good man, you tortured your memory until you yourself were deceived by an imaginary recollection."

"That I was not, sir," heartily replied the man. "I seemed just for one moment to be gazing again at the face of the stranger, and I knew then that it was Dr. Malchi's resemblance to him which had confused my memory concerning him. In course, the likeness may have been only an accidental one; but that the two men—if they was two—was alike in height, figure, and features, so far at least as I could see 'em, I will stick to with my dying breath."

"Then why did you not acquaint me with your supposed discovery at once?" I asked, half annoyed and half amused at the man's pertinacity. "Why did you allow all these weeks to elapse first?"

My visitor brought his fist emphatically down on the table.

"I've come to this here house a dozen times and more, and asked if I might be allowed to speak a word with you, sir; but the dumb woman who always answered the door to me wrote on her slate every time either that you was out, or else that you had given orders that you was on no account to be disturbed. She be a deep un, sir, and no mistake.

Why, she ain't deaf at all; she knew what I was saying almost afore the words was out of my mouth, and if she bain't deaf, it stands to reason that she can't be dumb. That's how I argufies, sir."

I was considerably astonished to hear of his previous visits, but I did not allow my astonishment to appear, as I briefly tried to explain to him the lip language which formed one of poor Leah's most important modes of communication with the outer world; but Blake only shook his head incredulously, and reiterated his conviction that Leah was a "deep un."

"I shouldn't have seen you this evening if she had had her way," he observed, in a tone of great disgust. "She was busily scribbling more of her lies on her slate, when a young lady—chancing, I suppose, to overhear me asking—came out of one of the rooms, and told her to take my message at once to you."

"Well, now that you have seen me, you need give yourself no further trouble on my account," I said, opening the room door; "and if you will take my advice you will forget the real or fancied resemblance of the stranger to Dr. Malchi as speedily as you can."

"I will, sir, now that I've made a clean breast of my suspicions to you," he readily returned; "but you see, sir, the morning you came to my house you seemed just as anxious to find out the gent as now you ain't; it's none of my business though, of course. You have acted very liberal towards me, but if I'd knowed that you was going to change your mind so quickly, I wouldn't have troubled you with this here visit. Anyhow, I'm obliged to you, and with your leave, I'll wish you a very good evening."

"Good evening," I replied, touching a bell as a signal for Leah to show my visitor out.

I was annoyed with myself for letting Blake's unexpected visit disturb in any way my peace of mind, but I could not altogether avoid it doing so. I did not for one instant credit his supposed identification of the doctor as the unknown, but presumably compassionate, stranger. Blake had, most likely, I contemptuously thought, invented the assertion, or, at best, allowed his imagination to clumsily re-create a forgotten memory. No, I would not allow myself to think twice of his ridiculous statement; I would endeavour to forget it at once,

Greatly to my disgust, however, I found myself several times in the course of the evening wondering why Leah had not only refused him admittance, but had neglected to inform me of his visits.

Regina looked somewhat anxiously at me when I entered the dining-room, where she and Dr. Malchi were awaiting me.

"You have had a visitor?" she remarked, as I took my seat beside her at the table.

"Yes; the cabman Blake, whose name you may perhaps remember," I replied, addressing myself to Dr. Malchi as well as to Regina.

Leah was standing as usual behind her master's chair, and I noticed a quick, and possibly involuntary, movement of her lips. I glanced sharply at the doctor, but he was serving some soup, and seemed wholly absorbed in his task.

"Did he bring you any news?" asked Regina, crumbling her bread with her soft, white fingers, on one of which glittered the betrothal ring I had given her.

"None," I answered, "or at least none that I can trace to any other source than his own imagination. I fear," I laughingly added, "that Blake's inventive powers are greatly stimulated by the prospect of a stray sovereign or two changing hands."

The doctor laughed, and the conversation quickly drifted into a less personal and pleasanter channel.

As a rule, Regina and I, and sometimes, but not invariably, the doctor, would adjourn to the drawing-room after dinner, when Regina would again entrance me with her violin. She would improvise delicious melodies for my sole benefit, or she would evoke some wild, sweet plaint from the instrument, which, while it charmed, would sadden me as well; but she never again played to me the singular nameless music she had on the night I first listened to her. I often prayed her to, but she would only shake her head, and, if I reiterated my request, lay her violin aside.

Regina and I, however, were not, on the evening I am speaking of, destined to enjoy each other's company in quietude. The doctor had expressed a wish to attend the opening night of a newly-composed opera, and we had, rather unwillingly, promised to accompany him.

When I entered the theatre, with the girl I loved so dearly leaning on my arm, my heart swelled with pride and rapturous content. Many lorgnettes were turned upon her as she entered the box I had previously secured. She wore a cunningly-blended crimson and gold robe, which well became her imperially-moulded figure. Deep red camellias were fastened amongst the coils of her dark wavy hair and nestled in her bodice, whilst bracelets of gold, set with diamonds and rubies —my latest gift—encircled her rounded arms, and made their beauty more conspicuous.

"My darling, I wonder if you know how lovely you really are?" I murmured, as I seated myself next her.

She raised her dark eyes eloquently to my face.

"I only value my beauty because it pleases you," she answered, in a tone too low for the doctor behind us to overhear. "Oh, Clive, I should die if you ceased to love me."

Under the pretence of handing her a programme our fingers met, and my fond pressure answered her passionate declaration.

My eyes strayed again and again from the stage, and lingered on the loved face beside me. I was continually discovering fresh charms in it—each dainty curve, each lurking dimple, each expressive glance revealed new and hitherto unsuspected beauties, all of which demanded my silent admiration. When the drop-scene fell on the first act I carelessly, and for the first time, surveyed the crowded house. Fair women and irreproachably-dressed men together made a goodly show. Fans were fluttering and eyes were rivalling the sparkle of their owners' diamonds. The air was heavy with the fragrance of flowers, and the murmur of voices and the ripple of laughter rose and fell like a pleasant cadence. The box adjoining ours was occupied by a greatly-adorned lady, who had under her wing two white-robed maidens, whose shy enjoyment of evidently an unaccustomed pleasure was regarded as a breach of *les convenances* by their august *chaperon*. A youthful earl and his lowly-born bride occupied the next, and an American heiress and her bevy of admirers the next, and so on almost *ad libitum*.

Chancing to glance at the immediately opposite tier of boxes, my attention was unaccountably attracted to the girlish occupant of the box nearest the stage. A feeling of suffoca-

tion came over me. My heart beat with fearful rapidity, and for a moment the brilliant scene before me faded into darkness. I recovered myself with a mighty effort. Dr. Malchi was bending forward, and addressing some remarks to Regina concerning the previous act. Neither of my companions, I was glad to discover, had been watching me. What was there about the girl in the opposite box, I wondered, almost with terror, to thus strangely affect me? With a singular mingling of dread and fascination I turned my eyes again in her direction, and as I gazed long and earnestly upon her a thousand inexplainable emotions surged through my brain. Who was she? What strange power had she all unconsciously exercised over me? Could she, by any possibility, be connected with my forgotten past? I thirstily drank in every detail of her face and figure.

She was a very young girl, of an exceedingly fair countenance. Her soft, golden hair was simply arranged, and had neither flower nor jewel in it. She was alone in the box, but as I continued to regard her steadfastly she was joined by a tall, military-looking man, who I instinctively guessed to be her father. She slightly turned her head as she smilingly greeted him, and gave me a better opportunity for studying her face with a bewildered curiosity. Her rose-leaf complexion and long-lashed violet eyes, together with her clearly cut features and innocently frank expression, made up a picture which if once seen might be trusted to linger in any man's memory; but I—wretched man that I was—could not tell whether I had ever looked upon her before.

Regina spoke to me once or twice, and I answered her, but almost without knowing what I said. My thoughts were wholly concerned with the fair young girl opposite me. What association had she with my past? Had she and I ever met before? I vainly tormented myself with these and similar questions. I tried to forcibly turn my attention to the stage, but failed utterly. I could only again and again gaze helplessly at the girl who had thus strangely fascinated me.

As if by some magnetic intuition she became at last conscious of my gaze, and across the crowded theatre our eyes met, and a second afterwards I, great heavens! saw her lips part in a smile of recognition.

I stared stonily back at her. I cannot hope to clearly

define the mental torture I was then undergoing; I was like a man born blind whose eyes have suddenly been opened, but who has no interpreter to explain the mysteries he sees around him.

A quick, shamed blush dyed the girl's fair cheeks. She instantly averted her head, and apparently concentrated her attention on the stage, but her small ringless hand stole to her bosom, and, whether by accident or design I knew not, the white rose nestling in her low bodice fell in a little shower of petals to her feet. I thought of the withered rose-leaves still in my pocket-book, and wondered, with an agonising curiosity, whether the rose of which they were the mementoes could by any possibility have been in the past connected, or even remotely associated, with this lovely stranger.

"Are you not well, Clive?" asked Regina, at the close of the second act, with a low note of anxiety in the question.

"Yes, quite well," I a little impatiently answered. "By-the-bye, Regina," I added, with assumed carelessness, "can you tell me the name of the gentleman in the box almost directly opposite us?"

"The gentleman seated beside the young lady whom you have been scrutinising so attentively the last half-hour?" asked Regina, with a laugh which, in my then excited mood, jarred upon me.

I made her no reply, and she, after a cursory glance at the occupants of the opposite box, added indifferently, "I cannot satisfy your curiosity, Clive; they are strangers to me."

Dr. Malchi, who had heard my inquiry, raised his lorgnette and surveyed them attentively. I was annoyed to think that they should have been, through me, subjected to any purely inquisitive glances, and I determined not to speak of them again.

I resolutely turned my eyes on the stage, but I neither saw nor heard aught that was being enacted before me. Should I, or should I not, throw myself on the fair young girl's mercy, and after telling her my strange story, implore her to reveal to me all she knew of my forgotten identity? Would she, thinking me a madman, shrink from me in horror? Would she, would anyone save the two people seated beside me, give credence to my amazing assertion?

My heart sank within me as I realised the hopelessness of making any unprejudiced person understand my case. I will be content with the present, I said within myself; I will let the past and all its forgotten associations pass away for ever. I will not be always seeking to recall it. But what, I thought a moment afterwards, if that passing away includes the repudiation of past or future acquaintance with the girl who had but a few moments before greeted me with a friendly smile? Must she, as part of a dead past, be ignored also?

When the curtain fell, then, and then only, did I allow myself one farewell glance at the opposite box. Its occupants had already risen, and the military-looking gentleman was sedulously enveloping his daughter—if daughter indeed she was—in a white fleecy wrap. They left their box the same moment we left ours, and as the door swung behind us, I thought, with a certain regretful tenderness, that I had looked my last on the girl who, I dumbly felt, was associated with my past existence.

As we passed out into the crowded lobby, a gentleman—a scientific acquaintance of Dr. Malchi's—suddenly accosted us, and before anyone could guess his intention, introduced us to his friends Colonel and Miss Narcissa Westmoreland—the whilom occupants of the stage-box.

CHAPTER XI.

AT COLONEL WESTMORELAND'S HOUSE.

Miss Westmoreland bowed coldly to me. There was no smile of recognition upon her face now. Surely I must have been utterly mistaken in supposing it meant for me, I thought, and yet, perplexed beyond measure, I knew that I was not. I was certain that directly her eyes had rested upon my face she had instantly recognised me. Did she justly resent my unpardonable forgetfulness? Could I ever hope to make her understand and commiserate my wretched

condition? Good heavens! was this meeting but the precursor of other and similar encounters with forgotten friends?

"Tempest—Tempest," repeated Colonel Westmoreland, as he shook hands with me, "surely I ought to remember that name. I wonder now if you are the son of poor Dick Tempest who was killed out in Zululand?"

I do not know what reply I should, if left to myself, have made. Probably, in my miserable perplexity, I should then and there have blurted out the truth, but the doctor, with a self-possession for which I inwardly blessed him, came to my rescue.

"I believe the Major Tempest, to whom you allude, left no sons," he said, with one of his pleasant smiles.

"Ah, no; of course not!" replied Colonel Westmoreland, still, however, attentively scrutinising me. "I remember now he had several daughters, but no son. Your face, though," he added, addressing himself to me, "seems somewhat familiar. May I ask——"

Heaven only knows what he was going to ask; but his daughter, by suddenly interrupting him, averted the threatened exposure.

"Papa," she exclaimed, "our carriage is waiting; we shall create a block outside if we linger here any longer."

We moved all together toward the portal, but as Colonel Westmoreland and his daughter passed out, the former said, with another hearty shake of the hand:

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Tempest, not only for your own sake, but because you are a friend of Dr. Malchi's—a gentleman long known to me by repute. I shall be glad to see you at any time. I am a near neighbour of Dr. Malchi's. Narcissa, will you not second my invitation?"

Miss Westmoreland gave me one swift, almost perplexed glance, and then, totally ignoring Regina, drew her slim figure to its full height in what looked to me like childish petulance.

"I shall be pleased to see you," she said, in a tone that belied her words.

"Then I will certainly call," I said, determined to accept the invitation, and, if an opportunity occurred, explain to Miss Westmoreland my terrible predicament.

Regina was very silent during the drive home, She leaned back in her corner of the carriage and would not, either by the doctor or myself, be drawn into conversation. My half-formed resolve of acquainting her with the singular effect Miss Westmoreland had had upon me died suddenly away. She would not understand it, and, therefore, she could not be expected to sympathise with it. I had better, for her sake, remain silent. I sighed impatiently, and wondered how much longer it would be ere I should feel content to remain a riddle to myself.

As I assisted Regina out of the carriage, she let her hand linger a moment in my clasp, and, looking at me with her whole soul in her beautiful sombre eyes, she said, very quietly, "Cannot my love make you willing to forget all else?"

Before I could answer her, she had passed swiftly into the house.

A few days afterwards, cards of invitation to a dinner party were sent by Colonel Westmoreland to Dr. Malchi, Regina, and myself. Dr. Malchi chanced to be engaged on the evening in question, and was consequently obliged to send a refusal for himself and Regina. The latter made no comment upon the acceptance or non-acceptance of the invitation, but she smiled rather wistfully as I asked her to decide for me.

"Say yes or no, darling. I will do exactly as you wish," I said, turning my own card over and over in my hand.

"If you do as I wish you will write no," she said, unhesitatingly. "Stay, you foolish boy"—as I seized pen and paper and prepared at once to write my rejection—"let me think it over a moment."

She knitted her brow in pretty perplexity, and I, for the thousandth time or so since our betrothal, surveyed her with enraptured admiration.

"You had better, I think, accept it," she at last slowly decided. "You want to know more of these Westmorelands —nay, do not interrupt me, Clive; you are free, quite free, to choose your own acquaintances—but, Clive," and Regina's voice faltered a little, "I warned you once that I was a jealous woman; will you bear with me while I tell you that I fear—I hate Narcissa Westmoreland?"

Again I was tempted to try and find words in which I might convey to Regina the remarkable feeling I had experienced in Miss Westmoreland's presence, but sentence after sentence I mentally rejected. How could I make clear to another what was enveloped in mystery to myself? Regina misunderstood my silence.

"You are angry—and justly so—with me for doubting your love," she said, laying her hand almost timidly on mine; "but, Clive, I could not live if you ceased to love me."

"And when will that be, Regina?" I asked, fondly caressing her hand. "I thought the age of miracles was past."

"You might cease to love me if you regained your lost memory," she very sadly returned.

"If that were likely to be the case I would pray incessantly to be allowed to remain in my present condition," I passionately declared.

"Old influences would once more sway you," she continued, heedless of my interruption. "Old friends would take the place of new, memories would prove stronger than realities, and we should be parted."

She passed her hand sharply across her eyes; but I had already seen the tears which were gemming her long lashes.

I drew her closely to me, and, murmuring protestations of my eternal, unswerving love, kissed her lips until they once more smiled.

"I am not myself this morning," she presently said, gently extricating herself from my embrace. "My petty household duties worry me sorely sometimes, I—— What do you think of Leah, my guardian's invaluable servant?"

Her question took me by surprise. Leah at that moment was far from my thoughts.

"What do I think of her?" I repeated. "Well, I don't know; I suppose she is a little superior to the ordinary run of women servants, isn't she?"

Regina gave a faint—a very faint—sigh. I fancied that she was a little disappointed at my answer.

"I cannot make her out," she said, almost as if she were speaking to herself. "She puzzles, and almost frightens me, sometimes. She creeps about the house just like a ghost,

and she looks at me out of her grave, wistful eyes as if—— Oh, I hate deaf and dumb people," she petulantly broke off.

I laughed. "Poor Leah! She is evidently devoted to her master. I daresay she resents——"

Regina looked at me very strangely. "That is one of the things that puzzle me," she said. "Leah serves her master well and faithfully, I admit; but she hates him—hates him," she dreamily repeated, "and yet fears him, too."

"You are fanciful, Regina," I said, lightly. "You forget that Leah's affliction makes her liable to be misunderstood. Would the doctor keep her in his service if he had the slightest reason to doubt her fidelity?"

"I do not doubt her fidelity," began Regina, hesitatingly. "She is a living riddle to me. I distrust her; and yet I am forced, almost against my will, to pity her. But do not let us talk of her any longer; write, instead, your acceptance of Colonel Westmoreland's invitation."

"I do not care greatly about going," I replied, playing absently with the pen; "I would rather, infinitely rather, remain at home with you."

"Flatterer!" laughed Regina. "I am afraid Mrs. Grundy would be shocked at your declaration. No, accept the invitation; I wish you to; I am jealous no longer of Miss Narcissa Westmoreland."

I wrote my acceptance accordingly, but afterwards contemplated the written words rather ruefully.

"My prophetic soul tells me that Colonel Westmoreland will get asking me more awkward questions, possibly during an awkward silence, at the dinner table," I said, with a dismal attempt at a laugh. "I can fancy I hear him saying, 'And now, my dear Tempest, what particular branch of the Tempests do you set claim to,' or, 'I am convinced, Tempest, that your features are familar to me; what was your mother's maiden name?' What answer, in the name of heaven, shall I make to these and similar questions? Had I not better at once say that, like Topsy, I growed, and never had an orthodox father and mother?"

Regina smiled very thoughtfully. "If I were in your place I should say that I was a stranger in England," she advised. "You might call yourself an Australian or an American, although I am afraid you would hardly pass for

a Yankee; and you must not, of course, have any friends or relatives in England. Say that you are touring or studying the medical profession, or——"

"In love with an apt teacher of the art of deception," I gaily concluded. "Many thanks, Regina. I will devote so many hours a day to coach myself up in the interesting personal biography I will found upon your hints."

When I, on the evening of the dinner party, entered Colonel Westmoreland's drawing-room, I found it already half filled with a brilliant assemblage of guests. My host, and a middle-aged lady whom he introduced to me as his widowed sister, Mrs. Polyblank, shook hands with me cordially, but Miss Narcissa Westmoreland, who was standing beside her father, favoured me only with the iciest of bows. Assuredly, I thought, as I stepped aside to make room for fresh arrivals, the smile of recognition which I had once fancied she had bestowed upon me must have verily been an optical delusion. Despite her cold reception of me, I could not refrain from regarding her with undisguised admiration. She wore a pale blue dress flecked here and there with clusters of white violets, and her sunny hair was crowned with the same flowers. In her fair loveliness she might, I ardently thought, have been mistaken for another Undine newly created from the azure summer seas.

Just before dinner was announced, Mrs. Polyblank said something in a low tone to her niece, and the latter, in reply, slightly, but decisively, shook her head. I could not, of course, verify my suspicion, but I at once surmised that Miss Westmoreland had refused to let me have the honour of taking her into dinner. A few minutes later, Mrs. Polyblank introduced me to my dinner companion—a piquant, dark-haired girl, Miss Pauline Leslie by name.

"Why, Mr. Tempest and I are old friends," said Miss Leslie, with a smile which showed her white, even teeth; "we do not need any introduction."

Escape was impossible. Mrs. Polyblank had already left us, and was busily engaged in pairing her other guests. I could only, with a feeling of despair, await the *dénoûment* which must, I thought, now surely come.

"Let me see," chattered my companion, pressing the tip of her fan to her lips, "this makes the third time we have met,

does it not? Oh, yes, once at Lady Templeman's ball, and once at Mrs. Vereker Holme's dance."

"And to-night is the third happy occasion of our meeting," I said, with a ghastly attempt to speak naturally.

"I really thought, though, that you had forgotten me for the moment," remarked Miss Leslie, very confidentially. "I watched Mrs. Polyblank bringing you to me, and I could not see the least look of recognition on your face."

"I must plead guilty to the charge of temporary forgetfulness, Miss Leslie," I said, wishing with all my heart that I had been told off to anyone else in the room; "but at the moment to which you refer I was deeply engrossed in thought—an unpardonable offence, I know, under the circumstances—and did not instantly recognise you."

"Do you know that gentleman—the one with the pink orchid in his coat?" she asked, passing to my intense relief from personal to general topics. "He is an author—makes heaps of money by his books; but he is a gourmand, and, consequently, a horrid man. Why, once he took me down to dinner, and—only fancy—he addressed just ten words to me during that terribly tedious hour and a half."

"May I ask what those ten words were?" I rejoined, able to breathe freely once more. "Were they fraught with condensed eloquence, or did they reconcile you to his past and future silence?"

"He said, 'I should like to shake hands with our host's cook.' He made no attempt to address me afterwards. I did not answer him, simply because I could not then think of a sufficiently sarcastic reply. When dinner was over, and it was too late, I had dozens, literally dozens, trembling on the tip of my tongue."

I laughed, and devoutly hoped that Miss Leslie, absorbed in her own chatter, might not observe anything extraordinary in my manner during the dinner, to which I nevertheless looked forward with nervous trepidation.

As we took our places at the dinner table, I found that Miss Westmoreland directly faced me. A tall, blond, somewhat effeminate-looking young man was seated by her side and paying her marked attentions, and her rather coquettish acceptance of them caused me to take a sudden and unreasonable dislike to her companion.

"Miss Westmoreland seems well amused," I said, as Miss Leslie paused to take breath after entertaining me with some of her ball reminiscences. "The gentleman with her has no lack of dinner conversation, at all events."

Miss Leslie glanced across the table, and then sank her voice to a significant whisper.

"I wonder if it is going to be a case; he is in earnest, of course, but I would rather not answer for Narcissa. She is my dearest friend, but——" and with a perfectly inexplicable smile at me, she left her sentence unfinished.

My heart beat very fast; the tone of her voice, rather than her words, had quickened its pulsation.

"May I inquire who 'he' is?" I said, trying to speak carelessly.

"Why, don't you know St. John Carrington?" she asked, in some surprise. "I thought everybody knew him."

"I, unfortunately, have not that honour," I replied, with ill-tempered sarcasm.

"He is an awfully nice fellow," observed Miss Leslie, with another mysterious smile at me. "I like him, and so does Narcissa; but, of course, liking and loving a man are two very different things."

"I am glad to hear it, for Miss Westmoreland's sake," I said. "Mr. ——."

"Lieutenant," corrected Miss Leslie.

"I beg his pardon. Lieutenant Carrington may be an awfully nice fellow, but he certainly is not worthy of being associated, even in name, with Miss Westmoreland."

My neighbour leaned back in her chair, and glanced at me with obvious amusement.

"The spirit of prophecy is upon me," she laughingly declared. "I hear the order given, 'Call me early, waiter; pistols for two, coffee for one.'"

"I smile, as in duty bound, Miss Leslie," I disagreeably enough retorted; "but I must confess that I am far too obtuse to see the point of your witticism."

"None so blind as those that will not see, Mr. Tempest," she returned, good-temperedly. "I will, however, forgive your 'obtuseness' this time. I have known St. John Carrington," she added, for my enlightenment, "ever since I was two years of age. He and I were child sweethearts,

and even now we have a bond of sympathetic union between us."

"Indeed," I replied, with only the vaguest show of interest.

"Yes," she went on, undauntedly. "He, although he has what the Americans would call a lovely front name, is always called Jack; and I, although christened Pauline, am known amongst my very intimate friends by the plebeian name of Polly. I insist, though," she added, "upon their spelling it with an ie when they write to me."

"Have you known Miss Westmoreland long?" I presently asked, wondering if my companion could throw any light upon Miss Westmoreland's studious avoidance of me.

"Years and years," she promptly answered. "We were at school together, and to this day I tell her all my secrets."

"And she reciprocates your confidence, of course?" I asked, a little more anxiously than my apparently careless remark warranted.

"She has, until lately," replied Miss Leslie, one or two dimples showing themselves in the near vicinity of her lips; "but now she is reserved, and no longer fully confides in me."

"Perhaps Lieutenant Carrington has usurped your place," I said, with a frown at my unconscious *vis-à-vis*.

"Very likely," and she softly laughed. "Dear old Jack; I mustn't be jealous of him, I suppose. But Mrs. Polyblank is trying to catch Lady Anderson's eye; she won't succeed, though, until her ladyship has eaten her pomegranate jelly, so perhaps I shall have time to ask you a few questions. Where have you been lately, what have you been doing, and where, oh where, is your friend?"

"My friend?" I repeated, slightly off my guard. "Do you mean Dr. Malchi?"

It was her turn to look puzzled. "Dr. Malchi! Oh! do you know that strange-looking man, who has such a beautiful daughter, or ward, though, I believe she is? I have heard all sorts of queer things said of him, and I am dying with curiosity to know whether they are true—but I must not forget that he is a friend of yours."

"Yes, and a highly-esteemed one too," I answered; "but to which of my friends did you refer, if not to Dr. Malchi?"

"Why, to your own particular friend, of course. Mr. ——

Dear me, how stupid I am. I have forgotten his name for the moment, but the man you know who was with you at Lady Templeman's ball."

"Ah, of course," I vaguely responded. "He has left London. I do not know," I added, truthfully enough, "his present whereabouts."

"Left London!" she echoed. "I am sorry; he was such a nice fellow. I remember, though, now, that he told me he was going on a long visit to a friend's house in the country. Don't you miss him awfully?"

"Awfully," I replied, wondering in the name of Fate who my unknown friend was, and why I should be expected to miss him at all.

"What is his name? Take pity upon me and tell me,' suddenly demanded Miss Leslie, wrinkling her forehead in perplexity.

My soul quaked within me. The *dénoûment* I had so far miraculously escaped was upon me.

"You must first do penance for forgetting it," I said, almost at my wits' end. "If you cannot recall it to your recollection, I will re-introduce you to him the next time we three chance to meet."

Mrs. Polyblank's bow was at that moment responded to by the lady who had been freely partaking of the pomegranate jelly, and Miss Leslie, as she rose with the rest, was obliged to content herself with a meaning shake of the head, and a bright glance expressive of a renewal of our conversation (which I secretly determined to avoid) when we met, later on, in the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XII.

I AM FORGIVEN.

My after-dinner ordeal was a less trying one than I had anticipated. Fortunately for me, politics were the leading theme of conversation, and my host was too absorbed in combating some arguments advanced by an equally earnest politician to indulge in purely personal conversation with

any of his guests. Lieutenant Carrington glanced at me once or twice across the table, with an indolent look of interest in his insipid blue eyes, and I—ostentatiously indifferent—returned the compliment.

"So poor Lonsdale has succumbed to his injuries," remarked a gentleman on my left to another who sat opposite him.

"Ah—yes. I saw his death in the newspapers several days ago. He was thrown from his horse in the hunting field, was he not?" responded the gentleman addressed.

"Yes, and his injuries were from the first suspected to be of a fatal character; the doctors never held out the slightest hope of his recovery," chimed in a portly, red-faced man at the bottom of the table.

"He had not long come back to England, had he?" questioned the first speaker. "Someone was telling me that —— I beg your pardon; what did you say?" This to Lieutenant Carrington, who, leaning behind the intervening guests, had said something to him in a very low voice.

After a repetition of the observation—whatever it was—the gentleman made no attempt to complete his interrupted remark. He looked at me in a faintly apologetic manner, and did not again allude to the Mr. Lonsdale whose sad death he had been discussing.

When we joined the ladies I, pretending not to see Miss Leslie, who was smiling rather archly at me, made straight for Miss Westmoreland, who, seated near the window, was listlessly glancing through a book of views. I halted irresolutely when I was within a yard of her, and tried in vain to invent some reasonable pretext for addressing her. A faint red tinged the pearly fairness of her cheeks, but she looked up very coldly at me.

"Are you at all interested in Alpine scenery?" she frigidly asked; "if so, you may care to look through this book," making as if to hand it to me.

"I am interested in Alpine scenery," I confessed, seating myself timidly beside her, "but will you not show me your favourite views?"

With constrained courtesy she at once proceeded to point

me out the half-dozen or so views which particularly pleased her. I knew that directly the last page of the album was turned she would, with some trivial excuse or other, leave her seat and not return to it again, or at least not until I had left its vicinity; so I determined to make the best use of my opportunity.

"Miss Westmoreland," I said, in a low voice, which vibrated with earnestness, "I have been unfortunate enough to offend you, but I desire earnestly to assure you that I am wholly ignorant of what I have done to merit your displeasure."

The swift crimson rushed over her face and bosom, and her delicate nostrils dilated with sudden anger.

"How dare you! how dare you!" she panted, to my amazement.

"Miss Westmoreland——" I began, helplessly.

"I hate you!" she almost forced the words through her white set teeth, and her violet eyes were dark with concentrated wrath.

"I am sorry," I stammered, wishing devoutly that I had left unuttered my well-meant protestation.

She bit her trembling lip and strove hard to regain a semblance of her wonted composure. After a moment or two of painful silence, I took up my unfinished assertion again.

"I am sorry—heartily sorry—to hear that you hate me," I said, trying to force a smile; "but indeed—indeed—I am a most wretched man. I have lately passed—indeed am now passing—through an unparalleled and miserable experience."

She made no answer. Her eyes were fixed upon the open book on her lap, but by the quick rise and fall of the violets resting against her breast, I could tell that her heart was still throbbing convulsively.

"You will not condemn me unheard," I pleaded, emboldened by her silence. "What, if I tell you that I am the victim of an extraordinary mental——"

"Narcissa, Miss Churchill is waiting for you to play your promised accompaniment to her song," interrupted Mrs. Polybank, bearing full down upon us.

Miss Westmoreland rose at once, and silently allowed me to lead her to the piano.

"Will you listen, if not this evening, to-morrow morning, to my defence?" I eagerly asked, as I found her the required music.

"No defence is necessary," she replied, "but——"

"You will hear it?" I cravingly supplicated.

She struck the first notes of the accompaniment, and I was forced to resign my place to the lady who was waiting to favour the company with a song.

A sudden tap of a fan on my arm made me look round. Miss Leslie had just crossed the room, and, ere seating herself, had imperatively demanded my unwilling attention. I reluctantly obeyed her summons, and, at her bidding, seated myself beside her.

"Can you guess what I heard half an hour ago?" she whispered, under cover of the music, and scrutinising me rather curiously.

I shook my head; I was in no humour to appreciate Miss Leslie's trivialities.

"Why, I was told," she continued, emphasising her words, "that Mr. Lonsdale was dead; that he died nearly a fortnight ago from the effects of a fall in the hunting field."

"Lonsdale!" I absently echoed. "Yes; I heard his death being discussed just now."

"Why did you not tell me that he was dead?" she asked abruptly. "You simply said that he had left London."

"I beg your pardon; I fear I have misunderstood you," I said, trying to recall my wandering wits. "You are speaking of——"

"Your friend, poor Mr. Lonsdale," interrupted Miss Leslie, rather sharply.

I drew a long breath. Why had I been fool enough to cross the threshold of Colonel Westmoreland's house?

"It is my turn to beg your pardon," said Miss Leslie, after contemplating me a moment in silence. "I see now that you could not speak of him to any stranger—and, of course, I am not much more than a stranger to you. I am very sorry."

I hated to go on deceiving the kind-hearted girl, but my path of unwilling deception, when once entered upon, would not admit of any turning back.

"Do not say another word," I hastily replied. "I—I did

not wish to shock you, and I could not altogether evade your question."

"But you said that you did not know his present whereabouts—oh, I suppose you meant it as a——I mean that you hardly knew what you were saying," and Miss Leslie looked truly shocked at the grim joke she supposed I had been guilty of perpetrating.

"I have been staying in the country lately," she said presently, "and therefore did not hear of the accident. Of course the newspapers have published full details of it, but then I never read newspapers. What an awful shock," she added sympathetically, "the tidings of his death must have given you!"

"My dear Miss Leslie, I have had a series of awful shocks lately," I said, saturninely.

"The poor fellow had not long returned to England, had he?" she commenced again, when the song being superseded by a noisy duet, I was obliged to watch Miss Westmoreland taken possession of by Lieutenant Carrington.

"No, he had not," I answered shortly, wondering when on earth her cross-examination of me would cease.

"Had he a mother or sisters?" she asked.

"He hadn't a relative in the world," I said, goaded to desperation with her inquiries.

She opened her bright eyes very widely. "Why, he surely had a father," she exclaimed. "I remember that he once—— Oh, dear me, Mrs. Polyblank is coming to ask me to sing now."

I breathed freely only when my companion was captured and taken away to the piano. My eyes wandered round the room in quest of Miss Westmoreland, but she, likewise Lieutenant Carrington, was nowhere visible. Directly I had assured myself of that most obvious fact, I allowed my growing ill-temper to deepen into positive sullenness. She had told me that she hated me; well and good, I would trouble my head no longer about her. She could go her own way (accompanied doubtless, by Lieutenant Carrington) and I would go mine. Why should I try to extenuate circumstances which, although she might not believe it, were uncontrollable? Why should I make myself appear ridiculous to her, and her friend, Lieutenant Carrington? I sat and

brooded over my real and imaginary wrongs, and returned courteously curt answers to all Mrs. Polyblank's well-meant conversational efforts.

"I wonder where Narcissa is?" said that lady presently, affixing her gold eye-glasses on her finely-chiselled nose, and glancing helplessly around the room. "She really ought to assist me in entertaining some of the younger guests. Would you be so kind, Mr. Tempest, as to stroll through the rooms, and, if you succeed in finding her, giving her my message?"

I sprang from my chair with alacrity. "I shall be delighted to do your bidding, Mrs. Polyblank," I said, with manifest sincerity; "I will at once go in search of Miss Westmoreland."

In the inner room I, to my surprise, discovered Lieutenant Carrington leaning disconsolately against the wall, and listening with rather sulky attention to Miss Leslie's frivolous chatter. His eyes and mine met, and an unmistakable frown the next moment darkened his face.

"Are you looking for me, Mr. Tempest?" coquettishly demanded Miss Leslie.

"I am seeking Miss Westmoreland: I have a message from her aunt," I somewhat coldly replied.

"Narcissa has vanished, unaccountable vanished," laughed Miss Leslie. "Lieutenant Carrington has been dying to go in search of her, but he dared not openly forsake me."

I strolled away from them, and, passing through a long conservatory, was just in time to see the hem of some azure draperies—which I instinctively recognised—disappearing round the door of a small room, which could only be entered through the conservatory. The door was opened, but I paused hesitatingly outside it. Would Miss Westmoreland resent my intrusion? She evidently wished to be alone. On the other hand, if I failed to deliver the message I was charged with, Mrs. Polyblank might herself come in search of her, and I guessed she was not in the mood, just then, to parry her aunt's inquisitive questions. As I thus painfully cogitated, a subdued sob broke on the silence of the room. I—fearing I knew not what—boldly crossed its threshold.

"Pardon me, Miss Westmoreland, but Mrs. Polyblank——" I stopped abruptly. She was seated upon a velvet lounge, and, with her face buried in its cushions, was vainly striving to

choke down her sobs. At the sound of my voice she looked angrily up.

"Go away," she commanded, with a petulant stamp of her foot; "I wish to be alone."

I turned at once to obey her. "Mrs. Polyblank sent me in search of you," I said humbly, "otherwise I would not have intruded."

"Stay, do not go for a moment," she said, pressing her handkerchief to her eyes, and still flushed cheeks; "I will go back with you."

I waited submissively at the door until she should recover her composure, which she assumed to do almost immediately.

"I have a bad headache," she said, with a look which seemed to dare me to discredit her assertion. "I—I often have bad headaches, and they invariably make me cry."

I bowed gravely, but made no answer.

"I think that this has been a most horrid dinner-party," she said, with a quick catch of her breath. "I shall always hate dinner-parties in future."

I looked yearningly across at her. She was but little more than a child in years and character. Her golden hair was ruffled by the sofa cushions, and tears, in spite of much vigorous rubbing, still lay wet on her cheeks.

"Why don't you speak?" she presently demanded, with an impatient gesture; "perhaps, though," she added bitterly, "you would rather enjoy the picture of my humiliation in silence."

"My dear Miss Westmoreland," I said, venturing to approach a little nearer her, "I know not what reason I have given you for disliking me so intensely, but——"

She flashed an exceedingly scornful look at me out of her expressive eyes.

"Your very disclaimer is an insult," she said, quietly.

One moment of anxious thought, and I crossed the intervening space, and faced her—pale, but resolute.

"Miss Westmoreland, tell me, for pity's sake," I ejaculated, "whether you and I were once—friends."

She rose to her feet. "Please take me back to my aunt," she said, very coldly.

"I implore you to listen to me," I wildly cried; "do not condemn me harshly; for pity's sake answer my question—were we once friends?"

"Yes, once; but we are enemies now, for evermore," she said, with outraged childish dignity.

"We met at balls—at dances," I said, never taking my eyes off her face; "you gave me once a white rose; see, I have it still," and with trembling fingers I unfastened my pocket-book, and showed her the withered rose petals.

The faintest of smiles flitted across her face. "You prize the gift and forget the giver," she deigned to observe. "Surely, Mr. Tempest, your conduct is inexplicable."

"I have been ill," I faltered. "I—oh, you will not understand me, you will deem me worthy only of your contempt——"

I paced the room excitedly, and then turned, and confronted her.

"Your influence has been upon me always," I passionately exclaimed. "Will you, therefore, forgive all that has puzzled you in me lately, and grant me once more your friendship?"

She looked at me with growing bewilderment. "I do not understand you," she said, very slowly. "If you had not wished me to believe that you had utterly forgotten me, why did you allow yourself to be a second time introduced to me? Why——"

"Do not, I pray you, ask me any more questions," I cried, terribly agitated. "I have been ill, and——"

"Mr. Lonsdale's sad death has, of course, deeply affected you," she softly murmured. "I suppose you were sent for at once?"

I turned away with a choked sob. I was sorrowing, not over a dead friend, but over my own dead existence.

She, naturally misunderstanding my emotion, laid her hand very gently on my arm.

"I am little more than a child; I cannot hide my feelings," she frankly confessed, "but I was hurt that night at the opera when you seemed not to recognise me, and I was rude to you this evening; I wanted to punish you. I forgot you were in trouble."

She broke off falteringly, and I, bending my head, reverently kissed the little hand still resting on my arm.

"You will forgive me?" I pleaded. "I am not at liberty to explain all that has lately perplexed you in me; but I have never ceased to feel the sweet influence which you have all unconsciously exercised over me."

"Well, then, now that we are friends again, I think I had better return to the drawing-room," said Miss Westmoreland, smiling charmingly at me.

"Say that you forgive me first,'!' I implored.

She laughed. "I forgive you, although I am not quite certain what you have done to require my forgiveness. You had not forgotten me, and yet you acted as if you had—oh! well, I never could understand riddles; perhaps, though, you were jea—I mean annoyed——"

"At Lieutenant Carrington dancing attendance upon you so much lately," I gaily concluded.

She blushed, and looked down on the floor with delicious confusion.

"Oh, what will auntie say to me!" she cried, in sudden dismay. "I must go back at once. Tell me, Mr. Tempest, if you think she will guess I have been crying? Am I a very dreadful fright?"

I scrutinised her sweet face very attentively. Only the flushed cheeks, which deepened in tint beneath my gaze, told of her recent agitation. Her eyes and lips smiled mischievously.

"Well?" she asked anxiously.

"You look perfectly—adorably lovely," I blurted out awkwardly enough.

She laughed outright. "You never used to flatter me so broadly, Mr. Tempest," she gaily declared; "you have certainly not improved in the art of compliment-turning."

As we strolled leisurely through the conservatory, on our way back to the drawing-room, Miss Westmoreland said abruptly:

"By-the-bye, you are staying with Dr. Malchi, are you not? I did not know that he was a friend of yours until that night we met"—and she glanced laughingly at me—"at the opera."

"I have not long enjoyed the pleasure of his acquaintance," I said, very slowly. "He has shown me great kindness, and——"

"Miss Latimer is a beautiful girl," interrupted my companion. "Do you not think so?"

I looked down on the lovely upturned face so near me before I replied, "Yes, Miss Latimer is undoubtedly beautiful."

"I do not like her though," declared Miss Westmoreland. "She is a statue made to be admired, but not loved."

"I am one of her most enthusiastic admirers then," I lightly returned. "May not a Pygmalion change her from a statue into a woman?"

She shook her head coquettishly. "Take care, or I shall dislike Miss Latimer almost as intensely as you do Lieutenant Carrington."

CHAPTER XIII.

NARCISSA OR REGINA?

I REACHED home in a state of great mental excitement. I could not sleep, but lay tossing uneasily from side to side. How could I have forgotten, even for one moment, Narcissa Westmoreland? Her fair, innocent, lovely face was continually before me. I thought of Regina, and groaned aloud. By what strange freak of circumstances was I in my present position? I had, in my new existence, found for myself a new love. In my former existence, which, against my will, was day by day unfolding itself to me, I had—— I dared not complete this sentence, even to myself. How was I to act in the future? Was I to show myself regardless of the present or the past? Morning dawned, and I had not solved the momentous question. I had promised to ride in the Row with Miss Westmoreland at noon, and in the evening Dr. Malchi, Regina, and I had arranged to dine at the house of one of the doctor's scientific friends. It was certain that I could not long maintain my dual identity, for that, paradoxically enough, my singular experience practically amounted to. Trying to comfort myself with this idea, I managed to snatch a few moments' sleep, but arose troubled and unrefreshed.

Regina was in one of her silent moods that morning. She asked me no questions concerning my visit to Colonel West-

moreland's house, and I, after one or two casual allusions to it, was content to let it thus be ignored. Dr. Malchi eyed me sharply, and, contrary to his wont, showed a disinclination to leave me to my own devices. I, however, managed, without exciting any suspicion, to evade his threatened companionship, and, with a strange mingling of reluctance and eagerness, betook myself to my appointment.

Miss Westmoreland was accompanied by her father, who looked, in spite of his sixty winters, every inch a gallant soldier, as he sat, straight and firmly, on his iron-grey horse. Miss Westmoreland, in her dark blue habit and cap, was even more lovely in the searching daylight than she had appeared the evening before. Her pure, fresh complexion was without a flaw, and she looked the veritable incarnation of innocent happy girlhood.

The colonel saluted me with obvious friendliness. "Glad to see you, Tempest," he said, as I drew rein at his side.

Miss Westmoreland blushed delightfully, and held out to me her little gauntletted hand. I bowed low over it. Dear little hand, I thought, happy the man who dared claim it for his own!

"My daughter tells me that she first made your acquaintance when she was staying over yonder," and the colonel gently flourished his whip in Kensington direction. "I was under the impression," he added, "that you had met for the first time at the opera the other night."

I, somewhat disconcerted by Miss Westmoreland's mischievous glance, murmured some vaguely courteous reply.

"Ah! Lady Caple has left town," he continued; "she has gone on a long visit to her eldest son, Tom Caple, who has lately taken to himself a wife."

"I love staying at Lady Caple's house," broke in Miss Westmoreland; "she is the dearest old lady in the world, and not half as old-fashioned in her ideas as auntie."

"Which assertion being interpreted, Mr. Tempest," remarked the Colonel, "means that Lady Caple spoils my girl, and that my sister, Mrs. Polyblank, does not."

"Why, papa, everybody says that you spoil me dreadfully," declared Miss Narcissa.

The Colonel and I laughed together at her *naïve* retort, and then presently the conversation merged into the general

topics of the day. After we had ridden once though the Row, the Colonel walked his horse beside a carriage in which reclined one of his fellow officers, lately invalided home from India, and bade us enjoy a canter while he chatted to his friend. We obeyed him, nothing loth. Miss Westmoreland laughed and talked to me freely, and I—I threw all my forebodings aside, and yielded myself entirely to my strange new happiness.

"Good morning, Miss Westmoreland," exclaimed Lieutenant Carrington, riding eagerly towards us, just as we were thinking of rejoining the colonel.

She bowed very coldly to him, and he and I, by way of acknowledging our previous introduction, frigidly raised our hats to each other. He rode a little way with us, but the remarks which he evidently cudgelled his brain to make entertaining and acceptable to at least one of his hearers met with but scant encouragement, and presently, losing heart at his non-success, he bared his head again and rode dejectedly away.

I accompanied Colonel Westmoreland and his daughter to their own house, but did not accept the former's cordial invitation to luncheon, despite the look of surprise which flitted across Miss Westmoreland's face at my refusal. I wanted to be alone. I wanted to calmly think over my extraordinary experience. Before I returned to Regina I must have arranged my plan of future action. I had been willing to forget my past existence, and, lo! it would not be forgotten; slowly but surely it was revealing itself to me. Against my better judgment I had been persuaded by Regina to live only in the present. The past had its claims upon me. How dared I attempt to disavow those claims? They might, for aught I knew, form an insuperable barrier to my future union with Regina. Beads of perspiration gathered thickly on my forehead at my own conflicting thoughts. I envied the very beggars who craved my alms. They were at least more fortunate than I. They were not torn to pieces with embarrassing hopes and fears. They had not undergone a similar hideous phase of mental jugglery.

I determined, after much anxious thought, to see how far the clue which lately chance had placed in my hands would lead me. I must, for Regina's sake, seek to discover if any

fetters, which honour would forbid me to break, linked my past with the future.

I presently entered a news-agent's office and purchased as many numbers as I could get of the previous six months' daily issue of the *Morning Post*—a period of time exceeding by three months the duration of my stay under Dr. Malchi's roof. I gave a boy a shilling to carry the packet to the nearest hotel, where I engaged, for a few hours, a private room. Ordering a bottle of claret and some biscuits, I settled almost immediately to my task.

As soon as the waiter, after bringing my slight refreshment, had left the room, I locked the door, and, taking the earliest number of the budget, commenced its careful examination. Miss Leslie had, I remembered, stated that full particulars of the accident which had befallen my forgotten friend Lonsdale had been given in the daily newspapers. Perhaps I might come across some allusion to his friend—myself—in one of the aforesaid paragraphs. It was but a feeble hope, but if I failed in discovering aught that could possibly concern me, I should have, at all events, learned somewhat of the man who, I was told, had once been my friend.

I scanned paper after paper, and disappointedly laid several consecutive editions aside. Presently I suddenly caught sight of my own name. It was in the list of guests at a fashionable ball given by Lady Caple, of Kensington Crescent. Clive Culverwell Tempest, preceded by the name of Kenneth Ambrose Lonsdale. I stared at the printed account of the ball, and wondered helplessly if I had first met Miss Westmoreland, who, by her own account, had been in the habit of visiting Lady Caple, at it. I carefully put away the sheet for future reference and proceeded with my search. In the editions for the following month I found my name twice—once amongst the list of guests present at a Lady Templeman's ball, and once amongst those invited to a dinner-party given by a well-known baronet. In the last two lists the names of Miss Narcissa Westmoreland and Kenneth Ambrose Lonsdale figured as well as my own.

I came at last to the week in which I had unconsciously undergone my strange transformation. I had commenced life anew on Wednesday, the third of September. Where

was I, what had befallen me, on the preceding Monday and Tuesday? I examined Monday's paper with avidity, but, although I carefully scanned each of its columns, I found nothing to personally interest me. The newspaper dated Tuesday, the second of September, seemed, at first sight, to suggest even a greater dearth of news than its predecessor, but, on turning the sheet over, I was somewhat surprised to see in its advertisement column Dr. Malchi announced to deliver that same evening, at seven o'clock, a lecture on hypnotism in a hall not far from his own residence. He must have been returning from that same lecture when the police inspector called him to my assistance. An absurd thought suddenly struck me—Was I hypnotised, and had the doctor interested himself in me on that account? I laughed at the idea the next moment. So far as I understood hypnotism, it was a production of artificial unconsciousness by means of mystic passes, will-force, and so forth, and certainly not in any way applicable to my case. No, I was the unfortunate victim of a remarkable mental phenomenon, which, as the doctor had once thoughtfully observed, was remarkable only inasmuch as it was, so far as we knew, the first of its kind. I had not guessed before that Dr. Malchi dabbled in hypnotism, but I was not surprised at the discovery. He was an extraordinary man, (I was far from guessing how extraordinary), and might naturally be expected to turn his attention to uncommon subjects of interest. I cared nothing myself for the art dignified by the high-sounding title of hypnotism. It was, I felt assured, an outcome only of mesmerism, which, in its turn, had been in the Dark Ages termed witchcraft, necromancy, demoniac influences, and similar sensational appellations; but, although considering that hypnotism had nothing to do with my own individual case, I laid the newspaper containing the announcement aside with the others.

After I had waded through the editions for the ensuing eight or nine weeks, I arrived at the paragraph I was especially seeking. I had, of course, seen the newspapers regularly for the last three months, but, by some chance or other, the paragraph in question had escaped my notice. It was headed "A sad accident in the hunting field," and ran as follows:—

"Yesterday"—the paper, by-the-bye, was dated the first of November—"a serious accident occurred to Mr. Kenneth Ambrose Lonsdale, whilst out with the Champney hounds at their opening meet at Abbot Park, near West Drayton. He was in the act of taking a fence near the Home Farm, when his horse baulked and threw its rider heavily to the ground. Drs. Grant and Williams were quickly in attendance, and the injured gentleman was removed in an unconscious condition to Trevor Hall, the residence of Mr. Cuthbert Windsor, with whom he had been staying for the past two months. On examination it was found that severe concussion of the brain had taken place, and the doctors give no hope of his recovery. Mr. Lonsdale is, we believe, an Australian by birth, but has recently inherited the estates of his late uncle, Mr. Ambrose Lonsdale, of Lonsdale Park, Surrey. Much sympathy is felt for Mr. Lonsdale's aged father, who still resides in Australia, and to whom the news of the accident has been transmitted."

In an edition dated a fortnight or so later, I read the terse announcement of the injured man's death.

I carefully pocketed the selected newspapers, and inwardly determined, with their help, to piece together my forgotten existence. Strong in my rekindled resolution, I left the hotel, and, on my way back to Dr. Malchi's house, dispatched a lengthy telegram to Mr. Cuthbert Windsor, of Trevor Hall, asking him to forward by return of post answers to the questions asked him by a man who once had been Mr. Lonsdale's most intimate friend.

I could do nothing more until I received his reply, which under my second name Culverwell, I had requested to be addressed to me at a club I sometimes patronised; so, well satisfied with my morning's work, I accompanied Regina and the doctor to the scientific dinner-party, and strove, in devoted attentions to my betrothed wife, to forget once more the sweet face of Narcissa Westmoreland.

CHAPTER XIV.

A QUARREL WITH REGINA.

FOUR-AND-TWENTY hours after the dispatch of my telegram, I received Mr. Windsor's postal reply, which I opened and read in the privacy of my small study, and which I proceed to copy *verbatim*.

"Trevor Hall, Drayton, 6th Dec., 188—.

"Dear Sir,—I have much pleasure in categorically answering, to the best of my ability, your questions.

"Firstly: When, and under what circumstances, did I first become acquainted with the late Mr. Kenneth Ambrose Lonsdale?"

"Answer: I met him and a friend of his—a Mr. Clive Tempest—at the house of a mutual acquaintance, named Hastings, who, I believe, has lately left England for the purpose of rejoining his regiment in Calcutta.

"Secondly: Was I on terms of intimate friendship either with Mr. Lonsdale or his friend, Mr. Tempest?

"Answer: To this question I must reply in the negative. My acquaintance with Mr. Lonsdale was unfortunately extremely brief, but I both liked and esteemed him greatly, and, doubtless, if he had lived, our pleasant social intercourse would have merged into a lasting friendship. I was once introduced to Mr. Tempest, but I have never met him since, neither do I know his present address.

"Thirdly: Did Mr. Lonsdale ever speak of his friend Tempest, or allude to any matter personally affecting the latter?

"Answer: Mr. Lonsdale frequently expressed his surprise at not receiving any letter from Mr. Tempest; and on the morning of the accident he announced at the breakfast-table his intention of running up to London for a day or two on purpose to find out what had become of his friend. He never, as doubtless you are aware, spoke after the occurrence of the accident.

"Fourthly: Can I form any idea concerning when and where Mr. Lonsdale and Mr. Tempest became first known to each other?

"Answer: I cannot; but I have an impression—it is but an impression, though—that they were not friends of long standing. Words dropped carelessly by Mr. Lonsdale (before he accepted my invitation for the shooting and hunting season) incline me to believe that they met for the first time on board the ship in which Mr. Lonsdale left Australia for England.

"Fifth, and last: Had Mr. Lonsdale any relatives in England who might possibly be in a position to answer any questions respecting his personal friends?

"Answer: I believe not, but that question can be easily solved by writing to Mr. Lonsdale, senior, whose Australian address I append on the back of this letter.

"Greatly regretting the sad fatality which has, I presume necessitated your questions,

"I remain, dear sir, yours very truly,

"CUTHBERT WINDSOR.

"C. Culverwell, Esq."

I sighed heavily as I absently re-folded the letter. My inquiries were verily checkmated in all directions, but stay! there was just a loop-hole of hope left me. I might write to Mr. Lonsdale, senior, and ask him if the name of Tempest was familiar to him as the name of one of his late son's friends. If Mr. Windsor was wrong in his surmise that we were only recent acquaintances, I might, with Mr. Lonsdale's aid, trace back, inch by inch, my own lost individuality. I thrust the letter into my pocket, and determining to at once institute inquiries concerning my quickest mode of communicating with Mr. Lonsdale, I went into the next room, and told Regina that some unexpected business might prevent me from returning home (I already called Dr. Malchi's residence home) to dinner.

She was standing at the table filling some tall Venetian glasses with the flowers which, since our engagement, I had ordered to be sent her daily from one of the neighbouring florists. She did not make me any answer, but proceeded with her task, and I, gazing at her with a curious dissatisfac-

tion which I could not have explained even to myself, thought—and not for the first time—that a woman to be truly beautiful must have hair as golden and eyes as darkly blue as Narcissa Westmoreland. The daylight did not suit Regina; her beauty needed artificial illumination. She was too statuesque-like to look well on a dull, sunless morning, and, as I came to survey her more closely, I noticed that her eyes had lost much of their brightness; they were sunken and expressive only of weariness of soul. She was pale almost to sallowness, and something about her face reminded me of Dr. Malchi. Was she—could she be——? I hated myself for the unfinished thought, and for the moment I hated the expression which had given it birth.

I put my arm (somewhat carelessly, I own) around her waist, and, bending over her, kissed her on the lips. "Good-bye, my queen," I said, and I wondered a moment afterwards whether my words had sounded as forced to her as they had to myself.

I saw her fingers close tightly over the two or three dark red roses she was holding in her hand, and the little colour left in her cheeks and lips suddenly ebbed from them.

"Clive, I am not your queen; you do not love me any longer. I know it—I know it——" and her passionate cry wailed strangely through the room.

"Regina!" I indignantly cried, and advanced a step nearer her, but she waved me back.

"You are in love, or deem yourself in love, with Narcissa Westmoreland," she continued, with indescribable bitterness. "Aye, you can turn pale; I have guessed the truth only too well. Fool that I was to believe for one moment in your pretended love for me!"

"You are judging me harshly, Regina," I said, very quietly. "I am interested in Miss Westmoreland; she exercises a strange influence over me; she, I have lately ascertained, was associated with my past existence, and for that reason—for that reason only—I——"

"I know all the excuses you fain would utter," she interrupted, contemptuously holding out her hands, and letting the crushed roses fall to the ground. "Not an action—hardly a thought of yours—has escaped me. I know that even now, after swearing to be content to remain forgetful of the past,

you are doing all that lies in your power to regain your lost memory—and with it Narcissa Westmoreland."

"When I promised you that I would contentedly remain in my present terrible ignorance," I said, deeply agitated, "I promised you more than my duty to my God, my own self-respect—nay, more, my honour towards you, my plighted wife, allowed me to perform. I will, if only for your sake, recover my memory of the past."

"So that you may know whether or not you are free to love me," she said with a short, hard laugh. "What if you discover that you are in honour bound to another woman whom you loved and all but pledged yourself to, ere you saw me—what then?"

I was silent. Terrible doubts were assailing me. Was Regina as ignorant as I was of my own past?

"What then?" she mockingly repeated.

"In that case," I slowly replied, "I will pray God day and night to show me some way in which I may expiate my unwitting dishonour."

Regina's eyes were bright enough now. They blazed in her head like twin stars, and her slight form was shaken with the vehemence of her own passion.

"Did I not tell you to go from me?" she exclaimed. "Did I not warn you that my love would prove to you a curse? You would not obey me then; you would not flee from me like you would flee from one plague-stricken. It is too late now. I will never give Narcissa Westmoreland back her lover!"

She almost hissed the last words through her clenched teeth, and her likeness at that moment to Dr. Malchi was unmistakable.

I recoiled instinctively back. "So you own that I was once Narcissa Westmoreland's lover," I said, very steadily. "Regina, I command you to answer me. What do you know of my past?"

"All," she answered.

There was a moment of terrible silence. "May God, then forgive your sin against me, for I never can," I said, turning away.

Regina followed me with her eyes. "Go to Narcissa Westmoreland," she said, with a strange pathos in her voice,

"Ask her if she will continue to love a man who does not—cannot know—whether he be free to return that love. Ask her father whether he will give his cherished daughter to a man who can tell him nothing of his past existence—who cannot say whether that existence was not stained with crime."

I started indignantly.

"I have spoken truly," she continued, almost sadly. "For aught you know, you may have committed some sin which men refuse to pardon. You may be an outlaw with your hand against every man's and every man's hand against you. Perhaps worse. You may be a man who has cunningly evaded the just punishment of his crime, who——"

"Cease to torture me, woman," I cried, appalled at the picture her words had mentally conjured before me. "If you know my past, you know, at least, that your dark hints are without foundation."

Was it my fancy or did a great compassion creep into her strange eyes?

She stretched out her hand, and then let it suddenly drop to her side. "Ask me no questions, Clive," she almost entreated; "forget what I have said."

"You have said too little or too much," I exclaimed, vainly trying to control my rising excitement. "You shall answer me one question, at all events. Have you, or the man whom you call your guardian, laid this devilish spell of forgetfulness upon me?"

"I cannot, I will not, answer you," she faltered, and I noticed, but without any sense of compunction, the deadly pallor creeping over her face. "Clive, forgive me—I have spoken hastily," she added, with visible emotion. "If I have knowingly sinned against you. I have sinned only through the love I bear you. I love you, Clive, not with the idle sentiment such women as Narcissa Westmoreland dignify with the name of love, but with all the strength of my nature. Think, Clive; you are the one being on earth whom I love. Happier women have parents, sisters, brothers, friends. I have none—and you despise my love."

"Have you not despised, aye, and covertly derided me, for being so easily fooled by you and your precious guardian?" I bitterly answered.

She raised her head, and looked me full in the face; and before her calm and mournful gaze my own eyes fell.

"I will humble myself no more before you," she declared. "Spurn my love if you will, but do not deny it."

I strode to her and caught her hands in mine, and almost unconsciously held them in a vice-like grasp.

"Tell me all you know of me, Regina," I passionately entreated. "I can bear to hear even the worst from your lips."

"I cannot," she moaned, whether in physical or mental pain I knew not.

I suddenly released her hands. "I will not then endure the wretchedness—intensified now a thousand times—of my terrible forgetfulness any longer," I determinedly declared. "If you refuse to enlighten me concerning my past, I will kill myself; I will not live to see another day dawn."

Her breath came fast between her parted lips. "Ask Dr. Malchi; tell him that I sent you to him," she whispered rather than said.

She walked feebly to the door, and seeing her sway suddenly as she approached it, I hurriedly crossed to her side, and supported her for a moment.

She quickly recovered. "I am well now," she said, attempting to free herself from my clasp.

I was looking down into her face, and suddenly, almost as it were against my will, I kissed her cold forehead.

"Whatever I have been in the past, may God make me in the future worthy of your love, Regina," I said, very solemnly.

She broke shudderingly from me; and as I opened the door to allow her to hurriedly pass out, I saw Leah stealing softly away from it. If she had not been a deaf mute, I should have at once suspected her of being guilty of eavesdropping; but in her case I could only suppose that she had come, or been sent, on some trifling domestic business to her mistress, and that the unexpected opening of the door had startled her and caused her to betake herself—her errand unexplained—to her own quarters. I went after her and touched her on the shoulder.

"Where is your master, Leah?" I asked.

She felt for her slate, which invariably hung by her side,

and in neat, precise characters, wrote back :—"He left home a quarter of an hour ago, and bade me inform Miss Latimer that he should not return until late this evening."

"Do you know where he has gone?" I asked again.

She shook her head.

I dismissed her with a wave of the hand. Seven or eight hours, at least, of frightful suspense stared me in the face. I put on my hat and wandered out, hardly knowing or caring whither—one moment feeling that I hated Regina, and the next that I hated myself for not being contented with her love. She had darkly alluded to my past. Could it be possible that I had committed some crime and forgotten its very memory? I looked at my hands with a feeling akin to fear. Were they the hands of a just and honourable man or not? Had I knowingly or otherwise accepted my accursed forgetfulness?

I almost unconsciously turned into Kensington Gardens, and was glad to find them nearly deserted, despite the fact that the weather was, for the time of the year, particularly mild and pleasant. I strode up and down the quietest of the walks, and tried, with concentrated force of will, to remember my forgotten past. I tried, and failed utterly. As I realised the utter hopelessness of my case I groaned aloud, and for the moment was strongly tempted to make my way to the nearest bridge, and, by consigning myself and my hideous puzzle to the friendly bosom of Father Thames, free myself for ever from my difficulties. It was a cowardly resource, but was it not my only practical one? Narcissa would soon forget me, and Regina—— Ah! I dared not think of Regina; she was unlike the majority of women; she would pity, and at the same time despise me, and yet—strange contradiction—not cease to love me.

Chancing to feel the letter in my pocket which I had received that morning, I took it out and read it again, but this time with a curious indifference. Why had all my supposed clues failed me so entirely? Could it be that I, myself, had wilfully cast away my own personality? If I had, a powerful motive must have influenced me. What motive so powerful—and my heart throbbed painfully at this new thought—than the desire to escape from the haunting memory of a crime? Against my will I pieced

together the suspicious facts which had revealed themselves to me from out my past.

I had come to England alone—if Mr. Windsor was right in his supposition that Mr. Lonsdale and I had met for the first time on board the Australian ship—a supposition, by-the-bye, which I might easily verify. I had (say) on my arrival banked a large sum of money—how obtained I was yet to discover. I had presumably destroyed all important letters and documents. I was ready—anxious, perhaps—to begin a new life; but the peace and happiness of that new life was threatened to be overshadowed by the old. What could I do—what did I do to get rid of that memory? I had verily obtained a draught of the waters of forgetfulness, but how, and under what circumstances, I had yet to learn from Dr. Malchi.

CHAPTER XV.

FURTHER COMPLICATIONS.

WEARY of my fruitless conjectures, I strolled listlessly toward the central avenue of trees. Two ladies were just entering it from an opposite direction, and one of them was Narcissa Westmoreland. A mad delight surged through my veins at the sight of her smilingly-surprised face. Prudence—honour itself—bade me not take advantage of her unuttered welcome, but I weakly temporised with my duty and inclinations, and, with my whole soul in my eyes, advanced to meet her.

We shook hands and exchanged commonplace greetings enough, and then Miss Westmoreland introduced me to her friend, Fräulein Müller—a lady who evidently acted in the dual capacity of duenna and companion. Still uttering trite remarks, we strolled about the gardens until the Fraülein announced her intention of resting on one of the seats whilst Miss Westmoreland and I continued our stroll.

"Delay not long your return, dear one," she said, in her soft guttural accents; "we must not keep the good papa waiting for his dinner."

"Neither must we keep the good Fraülein," mimicked Miss Westmoreland, making an adorable *moue* as we left that lady to her knitting, which she mysteriously produced from some hidden pocket. "Old people," she added with a sigh, "think only of eating and drinking and scolding those who have the temerity to be young."

I looked anxiously at her. She was such a child in her thoughts and actions that I at once guessed that somebody, or something, had vexed her since we had last met.

"Why did you not join me in my ride this morning?" she presently demanded.

I started guiltily. I had fully intended doing so before my stormy interview with Regina, but I could hardly urge that as an excuse for my non-appearance.

"I had an important letter this morning," I replied, "and I was forced to forego the happiness of riding with you and your father."

Stern duty made me add the latter clause, but I was not proof against the puzzled look with which she regarded me.

"Narcissa, forgive me. I was bound to stay away," I hurriedly added; "indeed, even now I ought to deny myself the supreme bliss of looking into your sweet face, and listening to your dear voice."

"Why?" she innocently asked.

"Because I am the most unfortunate wretch on the face of the earth," I bitterly rejoined; "I cannot even answer *you* more explicitly."

We were in a retired portion of the Gardens. Not a soul was in sight as Miss Westmoreland, suddenly withdrawing her hand from my arm, stepped slightly forward and confronted me.

"I cannot understand you of late," she commenced, very sadly. "You mystify and wound me at the same time."

I remained silent. What answer could I make her?

"I must speak, even at the risk of being considered unmaidenly," she continued, her cheeks flushing hotly; "but, Clive, we are drifting apart, and the fault is not mine.

"Nor mine, God knows," I cried passionately.

"What has made you so strangely unlike your old self?" she asked, with an unuttered reproach in her eyes. "Can it be that you—you have ceased to love me?"

I threw out my hands with a gesture of terrible despair. "For your own peace of mind," I implored, "ask me no more questions; I—I cannot answer them."

"I have, then, guessed truly," she said, after what seemed to me an eternity of silence.

I shook my head. "My love for you is stronger than life itself, but ——" I did not attempt to complete my sentence. I could not say the words which would, I knew, part us for ever.

A little quivering sigh escaped her lips. "I have been tormenting myself with all sorts of fancies concerning your strange behaviour to me lately," she confessed, with a swiftly vanishing smile; "and this morning when you failed to join us in the park, papa was very silent and thoughtful all the way home, and after luncheon he sent for me to come to him in his study, and ——" She stopped suddenly, and a sweet shame stole into her eyes.

"Go on," I said hoarsely, leaning against the trunk of a tree, and shading my eyes with my hand.

"He asked me," she bravely continued, "whether you had ever given me reason to suppose—that you cared for me, and I told him what you said to me when we parted that night at Mrs. Vereker Holmes's and that——"

"Stay," I interrupted; "repeat to me exactly what you told your father I said to you that night."

A strange look of perplexity flitted across her face as she acceded to my request.

"I told him that you said you loved me, and that—that you kissed me."

"I kissed you?" I yearningly echoed, longing with an intense longing to commit again that forgotten transgression.

She smiled suddenly, and drew back a step or two.

"I also told him," she resumed, "that I had given you a rose, and that you had said you would always keep it as a memento of our betrothal. I left Lady Caple's house, as, of course, you remember, to join my father, who had just arrived home from India; and when he and I and Aunt Polyblank, who had been visiting some friends at Brighton during my

stay at Lady Caple's, came up to town, I, of course, kept expecting every day that you would call and explain everything to papa, and then—and then we met that night at the opera, and you behaved so cruelly and horridly to me."

A half sob sounded in her last words; but I could not say anything to comfort her. I could only gaze miserably at her, and futilely wish that the earth would at that moment open, and swallow me out of Narcissa Westmoreland's sight.

"Papa said that I was not to speak to you until he had heard your explanation—a command, by-the-bye, I have only this moment remembered," she added, laughingly. "I know that you *can* explain all the seeming contradictions in your words and conduct; but, Clive, I am afraid that papa will not easily forgive you for so long delaying your confession."

"I will see him to-morrow," I said, despair alone giving birth to my sudden resolution. "I can give him the explanation he justly demands, but he will not credit it."

She heeded only the first part of my declaration. "He may, perhaps, forgive you, if I ask him to," she said; "but you must prove to him that your lukewarmness as a lover was not intentional or avoidable."

I was looking straight at her, and I know not how it happened, but the next moment I had gathered her closely into my arms and was pressing hot, passionate kisses on her lips.

"Narcissa, I love you—you only," I recklessly exclaimed. "Promise me that you will, despite anything the future may reveal, believe that."

"Have I not shown you that I fully trust you, Clive?" she asked, gently releasing herself. "I do not even now ask for any explanation of your past conduct for myself—I am content to wait; although Clive"—and she laughed merrily—"I really know very little of you. Why, I have not the remotest idea if your parents are still alive, or if you have any brothers or sisters."

"I have neither relations nor friends," I bitterly replied. "In all the world there exists no creature so utterly alone as I."

Her little hand softly stole to my arm. "Do you not, then, count your sweetheart as anybody?" she questioned

reproachfully. "Clive, answer me, have you lately had money losses, or troubles in any way connected with money?"

I tried to smile as I replied in the negative.

She looked disappointed. "I was almost hoping," she said, a little wistfully, "that I had hit at last upon the true solution of the mystery. I have money, you know—or perhaps you do not know—independent of my father, so——"

I gently pressed the little hand. "I wish, with all my heart," I fervently interrupted, "that my present perplexities were only pecuniary ones; but they are not. Had I not better take you back to the Fräulein?"

"In a moment," she replied. "But, Clive, forgive me for asking you just one more question. Are these perplexities to which you so vaguely allude associated in any way with Dr. Malchi—or Miss Latimer?"

I was not slow to observe the hesitating way in which she pronounced the last name, and I earnestly reflected ere I answered her.

"Dr. Malchi may, perhaps, remove some of those perplexities. I cannot say more to you now. To-morrow I will make a full confession to your father."

When we got back to the Fräulein, I found, greatly to my annoyance, Lieutenant Carrington standing moodily beside her, and listening, with an evident lack of attention, to her improving conversation. He eagerly extended his hand to Narcissa, who, I was glad to see, looked unmistakably annoyed at the unexpected encounter, while he and I exchanged only the most frigid of salutations.

"Now, dear one," cried the Fräulein, rising briskly to her feet and stowing away her roll of knitting, "we must hasten to return to the good papa."

"I am quite ready, Fräulein," announced Narcissa.

"We bid you, then, gentlemen, an agreeable adieu," said the Fräulein, with a sudden movement of her body which might have been either a bow or a curtsey.

I lingeringly pressed Narcissa's hand; should I ever touch it again? I wondered.

"Good-bye until to-morrow," she whispered.

I do not know whether Lieutenant Carrington overheard her, but as soon as she and the Fräulein had disappeared out of our sight, he turned savagely upon me.

"Are you engaged to Miss Westmoreland?" he demanded with an ugly scowl.

"I refuse to answer your impertinent question," I instantly replied, looking him straight in the eyes.

"Impertinent!" he sneered. "Are you, then, an authority on social etiquette? You, who, for aught I and other men know of you, may be an adventurer—an——"

The next moment Lieutenant Carrington measured his length on the grass at my feet.

"Perhaps you will refrain from calling me an adventurer again—at all events, to my face," I remarked, waiting for him to rise.

He wrathfully picked himself up. He was livid with passion, and his pale blue eyes were glittering evilly.

"As sure as I live, I will make you repent that blow," he passionately exclaimed, shaking his fist in my face.

"I shall never repent giving you a lesson in good manners, Lieutenant Carrington," I retorted.

At that moment a nurse, accompanied by half-a-dozen children, took possession of the seat recently vacated by Fräulein Müller; and the woman stared at us with undisguised curiosity.

We could not, it was certain, continue our quarrel in her vicinity; but neither of us liked to be the first to walk away. Just as our position was becoming embarrassing, Lieutenant Carrington, pretending to see an acquaintance in the distance, moved slowly off, muttering something about paying me out at our next meeting.

After I had watched his retreating figure out of sight, I lit a cigar, and strolled (dejectedly enough, I own) away.

Surely the perplexities of my situation had in a few hours increased a thousandfold. I had been upbraided and mystified by Regina. I had been prettily scolded by Narcissa, and I had made a bitter enemy of Lieutenant Carrington. My coming interview with Colonel Westmoreland threatened to be even more of an ordeal than the one I must first have with Dr. Malchi, and yet, until that one had taken place, I was powerless to decide upon my future course of action.

Some hours of suspense were still before me. I feverishly wanted to be alone in some place where I might endeavour

to clearly think out the intricacies of my wretched position; and with this idea predominating all others, I presently made my way to the nearest river-side wharf, where I hired a boat and rowed myself a considerable way up the river. I then rested on my oars, and gave myself entirely up to reflection. After a while I took out my pocket-book and scribbled on one of its pages two of the questions which, if I could answer them, would determine either my future happiness or misery.

First question: If Dr. Malchi confessed that he had all along been cognisant of my past, and that he had, for some personal reason or other, wilfully kept me in ignorance of it, was I prepared to undoubtedly accept whatever he might choose to tell me concerning it? I puzzled long and anxiously over this question. Dormant doubts of Dr. Malchi suddenly burst into veritable suspicions. I remembered how Blake had again and again expressed his belief that the mysterious stranger who had placed me in his cab and Dr. Malchi were one and the same individual. If he were right in his conjecture, might not I, then, be justified in suspecting Dr. Malchi's veracity?

Leaving that question unanswered, I passed on to the second.

Under any circumstances, did not honour forbid me to marry either Regina or Narcissa? My troth was given to the one, and my love to the other. I had, it was true, loved Narcissa first, but yet, how could I forsake Regina? Ought I not rather to bid both women an eternal farewell, and, in some self-enforced banishment, hide my shame and misery?

My hand, still holding the pocket-book, dropped irresolutely to my side, and I gazed with unseeing eyes at the softly-rippling water over which the dusk of the short December afternoon was beginning to settle. Boats passed and re-passed me, but I heeded them not. My misery had surely reached its culminating point.

* * * * * *

"Has your master returned yet, Leah?" I asked, when she opened the door to me, some hours later.

She bent her head assentingly, and at the same moment Dr. Malchi himself crossed the hall, on his way, apparently to his bed. He cheerily accosted me, but his face betokened either fatigue or anxiety. Lines showed themselves about

his forehead and lips, and his eyes were almost painfully bright.

"I want a few moments' conversation with you, doctor," I began, without any beating about the bush. "I must ask you to grant them me at once."

He smilingly raised his eyebrows. "My dear fellow, will not to-morrow do? I have only just come off a journey, and am dead beat."

"To-morrow will not do," I shortly replied; "I must speak to you at once."

He flashed a singular look at me, which I met defiantly enough.

Without another word, he drew aside the velvet curtain, unlocked the door of his study, and, lighting a lamp which stood on a small table of inlaid ivory and silver, awaited my first words in expectant silence.

I closed the study door, and deliberately confronted him.

"Dr. Malchi," I said, very calmly, "Regina has bade me ask you to tell me all you know of my forgotten past."

CHAPTER XVI.

AN AUSTRALIAN ADVERTISEMENT.

He did not answer me for a moment, but still standing, and with his hand lightly resting on the back of a chair, he surveyed me with unconcealed interest.

"So, at Regina's bidding, I am to tell you all I know—or rather all I guess—concerning your own past, am I?" he at last very slowly rejoined.

His manner, rather than his words, jarred upon me. I lost my temper at the outset.

"Tell me all you know of me," I impatiently demanded. "God only knows whether I wrong you by my suspicions, but I have lost my faith in you to-day, Dr. Malchi."

"You suspect me—of what, Mr. Tempest?" he coolly asked, his eyes still fixed upon me.

"Of allowing me, for some sinister motive, to remain in my present state of ignorance, which a word of yours, had you but chosen to speak it, might have long ago dispelled," I fearlessly answered.

"Bold words, bold words, young man," he observed. "Perhaps you will next inform me what my sinister motive was."

"I will bandy no more idle remarks with you," I hotly replied; "unless you immediately acquaint me with all—all, remember—you know or have discovered concerning my own past life, I will——"

"Yes—you will?" he mockingly repeated, as I paused for an instant.

"I will denounce you to the police as a charlatan—a man who, by some accursed art, is answerable for my most miserable condition."

He laughed aloud. "Put your threat into immediate execution, my young friend," he retorted. "Find, if you can, the man who will believe your wild story."

I was silent. He was, I knew, trying to purposely irritate me.

"A few weeks ago," he continued, "you voluntarily announced your willingness to forego all knowledge of your past—why have you so speedily repented your resolution?"

"Am I to understand that you refuse to enlighten me?" I asked, ignoring his own question.

"Regina bade you come to me, you say?" he musingly observed. "I will, then, at her request, obey your demand."

He crossed over to his writing-table, and unlocking a drawer, took from it a small roll of manuscript.

"I wrote this," he said, tapping it with his fingers, "late the same evening that you unconsciously became an inmate of my house. Read it presently in the seclusion of your own room; it will not altogether satisfy your present curiosity, but it will, I think, prove that I have neither deserved your suspicions nor—pardon me—your ingratitude. It was written with the intention of giving it to you if unhappily the necessity arose. For your own sake I would fain have long ago committed it to the flames."

The quiet dignity in his last words strangely moved me. Had I misjudged him?

"Let me read it here," I exclaimed, eagerly unrolling the manuscript, "and if I have wronged you in any way I will —aye, only too thankfully—acknowledge it."

"As you will," he coldly replied, seating himself in his especial easy chair.

I, standing near him, immediately became absorbed in the perusal of my past as told by Dr. Malchi.

"I have only just returned from giving a lecture on hypnotism—the latest fashionable craze," the manuscript abruptly began. "My lecture was, I believe, a so-called success. It was languidly listened to by four or five hundred men and women, who cared nothing—knew nothing —either for or against the subject under discussion, and it elicited at given intervals certain vague applause. I care as little as my audience about hypnotism. My lectures explaining its use and abuse tend to make my name known in sundry scientific circles, and there my interest in it begins and ends.

"I have for many years past devoted all my thoughts and energies to an art the outcome of hypnotism, but far higher and far more difficult of explanation. To put it very tersely, I have long believed that under certain extraordinary circumstances a person of given will and temperament might banish from the mind of another person the memory of certain past events. My idea is not by any means a new one; it has been mooted by scientific men, and as a further proof of its supposed practicability, I may just mention that a popular novelist has recently suggested the possibility of all unpleasant memories being annihilated by the means of a galvanic battery applied to the head. I am afraid, however, that this idea is destined to remain unrealised. We shall never be able to put a penny in the nearest automatic galvanic machine, and receive so easily the electrical shock which, if the novelist's idea could be carried out, would instantly efface from our minds all unpleasant memories. Human will power, whether of the person who operates or the self experimenter, can alone influence so delicate a piece of mechanism as the brain; but, contenting myself with this slight divergence, I must return to my own theory, which, for self-evident motives, it will not suit me to more closely hint at.

"Again and again I experimented on unsuspecting per-

sons, but I failed lamentably in my efforts to induce complete mental oblivion. In two cases only, which I need not quote here, I was but temporarily successful. I did not, however, altogether lose hope of one day realising my ambition. That day was long in coming, but it came at last. I discovered what my experiment lacked to complete its success, and I supplied that want. I hesitated, though, to test it. I determined to wait until, to my mind, it had reached its final and perfected stage. The forgetfulness, to be a boon to mankind, must not affect other than purely personal reminiscences. It must leave untouched the intellectual and reasoning faculties. I closely gave myself to this fascinating study, which I fondly hoped I might one day present to the world, and after many weary months I succeeded in perfecting myself in it. I could, I firmly believed, not only will a person to forget certain events in his own past life, but all personal associations connected with that life. I believed that the person experimented upon would have no recollection whatever of even previously existing. He would, as it were, be newly born again. I was fully alive to the enormous moral responsibility which would rest upon me if my undertaking proved fully successful, but I did not shrink on purely personal and selfish grounds from essaying to carry it out. I felt assured that if this mysterious power, or secret influence—call it which you will—was rightly and sparingly used, an immense amount of happiness and content could by its means be introduced into the world.

"Day after day passed, and still my grand experiment awaited its final trial. A fitting opportunity for testing it offered itself for the first time this evening. After my lecture on 'Hypnotism' was over, a few strangers lingered behind, in order to avail themselves of my offer to privately answer any questions, or solve any difficulties which might stand in their way of accepting hypnotism as a yet only partially discovered beneficent science. Amongst these strangers was a young man of a singularly refined and intellectual appearance. He asked me several questions relating to hypnotism, which I answered to the best of my ability. He was evidently a sceptic on the subject, or if not entirely a sceptic, had but little sympathy with hypnotised persons.

"My heart beat fast as I gazed on him; at last the man on

whom my experiment might be credibly tested had been found. I led him aside and asked him, half jestingly, whether he would allow me to hypnotise him. As I had expected, he refused point blank. I then dropped a hint concerning the nature of the experiment I was wishful to test on him, and, somewhat to my surprise, I succeeded in rivetting his attention—nay, more, I aroused his interest to no common degree. He asked me many pertinent questions, and with strange abruptness announced his willingness to be then and there subjected to my influence. He confessed that he had strong reasons for wishing to forget his past, and I, nothing loth, consented to gratify his request. If my experiment failed, which I did not in the least anticipate, no one but myself and the stranger would be the wiser. If it succeeded, the ambition of my life would be realised.

"I got him well under my mental control, and without the persons present imagining they were witnessing other than an ordinary display of hypnotism, I succeeded in utterly obliterating all personal memories from his recollection. Directly I had done so, I allowed him to lapse into a state of hypnotised unconsciousness, intending him to awake out of it a new man.

"Now comes the singular part of my narrative. I knew nothing of the stranger, not even his name or place of abode. As I wished to assure myself, beyond doubt, of the complete success of my experiment, I determined to place him in a cab, and give orders for him to be driven within the near vicinity of my own residence. This I accordingly did. I did not wish to be afterwards identified by the cabman, neither did I wish to leave any clue which might afterwards mar the success of my experiment. The stranger should, as he wished, commence a completely new life. I therefore assumed a slight but efficient disguise, and, with my hypnotised *protégé*, left the lecture-hall. I hailed a passing cab, taking care as I did so, to stand in the shadow of a street lamp, and directed the driver where to take my unconscious companion. As soon as the vehicle was out of sight, I returned to the hall, changed my overcoat and sealskin cap for my ordinary coat and hat, and drove in a hansom to within a hundred yards of my own door. If the experiment had failed, the stranger would by that time have recovered con-

sciousness, and be none the worse for his temporary loss of memory; in that case I need not concern myself further about him.

"The experiment had not failed. The stranger, still unconscious of his surroundings, was assisted into my house, and I, writing this short narrative, some hours later, am looking triumphantly forward to his unparalleled awakening.

"When assisting my guest to undress I bethought me that doubtless in his pockets were letters and papers which would render him unable in the future to totally ignore his past. I therefore resolved to take possession of all such papers, and, as time might direct, either destroy them or return them to him. The circumstances I thought (and still think) justified my action. I searched his garments accordingly, and found several invitations to fashionable gatherings, one or two non-important notes from evidently a newly-made acquaintance, named Lonsdale, and an Australian police handbill, which may or may not account for my young friend's anxiety to forget his past. If it concerns him, the fact of finding it on his person is not so extraordinary as at first sight it may appear. Many a man before him has kept, instead of destroying, damaging and self-incriminating evidence. If my now sleeping friend is not content in his new life, but wishes to recall the memory of his past one, I will give him this narrative to peruse, and leave him to find out for himself whether or not the Australian police handbill concerns his forgotten individuality.

(Signed)

"MANUEL MALCHI."

I laid the manuscript down, and met the doctor's eyes.

"Give me the letters and handbill," I briefly said.

"You will then resuscitate a past which once you willingly consigned to oblivion?" he asked, a strange emotion in his voice.

"If that past concerned myself alone," I replied, "I might well shrink from its unknown revelation; but it affects the future happiness of others; therefore, I should be a coward indeed if I for one instant hesitated to recall its memory, if," I sadly added, "it is possible to do so."

"So be it," said Dr. Malchi, holding out to me, as he spoke

a small packet of papers which, until then, he had kept concealed in his hand.

I heeded not the half-dozen or so perfumed notes, or the couple of letters addressed to me in an evidently masculine caligraphy at the Queen's Hotel, Westminster. My whole attention was directed to the flimsy handbill which accompanied them. With trembling excitement I opened it and read:—

"£500 Reward.—Whereas Charles Cartwright Talbot, Englishman, absconded on the 17th of March, 188–, with twenty thousand pounds in gold, the property of his employers, Messrs. Duncan, Montgomery & Co., of Newark Street, Melbourne, the above reward will be paid to any person or persons who shall give such information as will lead to his arrest. The missing man is about twenty-five years of age, nearly six feet in height, and of a remarkably prepossessing and refined appearance. He is exceedingly well educated, and conversant on all social topics. As it is thought likely that he has made his escape to England, English bankers are cautioned against receiving a large sum in gold from any unknown depositor. Information may be given to the authorities at Scotland Yard, London, or to the Superintendent of the Police, Melbourne.

"N.B.—Talbot is audacious enough to endeavour to obtain, under false pretences, an *entrée* into English aristocratic circles; therefore leaders of society are warned against entertaining any uncredentialled stranger answering to his description. Further particulars will be furnished on application to the London or Melbourne Police Stations."

CHAPTER XVII.

I MAKE MY CONFESSION TO COLONEL WESTMORELAND.

"Am I the man thus advertised for?" I asked, my voice echoing strangely on my own ears.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "I know not. The handbill was carefully secreted upon your person; it may or may not refer to you, but you can easily get your latest question answered."

"How?" I harshly demanded.

"By asking the Scotland Yard authorities, of course, my obtuse young friend," retorted the doctor, with a smile which showed all his cruel white teeth.

I involuntarily advanced a step towards him.

"Are you a man or a devil?" I ejaculated.

He leaned back in his chair and looked at me out of his half-closed eyes.

"I would rather be a devil than a fool," he significantly observed. "You might, if you had chosen, have enjoyed your new life, and the fortune which you had happily forgotten acquiring; you might have begun afresh your existence——"

"On my ill-gotten money, I suppose?" I bitterly interrupted. "God only knows who or what manner of man I was before I met you; but hardly, I should imagine, as great a villain as you would fain make me now."

Dr. Malchi rose suddenly from his seat. "Shall I say, then, that I wash my hands of you and your affairs?" he questioned, with dangerously-glittering eyes. "Shall I from henceforth leave you free to mar your future as you will—unchecked by any advice or interference of mine?"

"You may say and do what you like," I haughtily replied. "You are not the keeper of my conscience."

"Conscience!" he repeated the word with a sneer. "Does not your conscience smite you concerning Regina, whose future you wreck with yours?"

He had touched the right chord, and he knew it. Dared I ruin Regina's life as well as my own? Narcissa I could

not—would not—think of. Supposing that the police handbill referred to me, it was pollution to link her pure name, even in thought, with mine.

"What would you do in my case?" I despairingly asked, after a moment or two of silence.

"Before I reply to your question let us together think out your position," returned the doctor. "Two courses lie before you. you can either follow out or not the clue which the police advertisement gives you. Say that you elect to do the first-mentioned. Very well. You go straight from my house to Scotland Yard. You ask the authorities there whether you are the man who stole—you wince at that word; let us say appropriated instead—well, appropriated twenty thousand pounds belonging to your employers. The police will quickly satisfy your laudable curiosity. If you are Charles Cartwright Talbot, you will, I am afraid, find some difficulty in meeting with either an English or Australian judge who will credit your extraordinary plea of forgetfulness, which, I presume, will be your apology for your tardy restitution. I do not know how long a term of penal servitude will be passed upon you, but——"

"I am not a thief," I passionately interrupted. "Could I possibly have committed a crime and forgotten it? Bah! the idea is preposterous. The handbill concerns a stranger—it must——"

"I will not argue with you," quietly remarked the doctor. "I will only ask you to explain the coincidence of your present initials being the same as the man Talbot's and the singularity of you as well as him being in possession of so large a sum in gold, which, by-the-bye, you must have banked about the time Talbot would have arrived in England—supposing him to have contrived his escape from Australia soon after he had committed the robbery."

"If I had wrongly obtained my twenty thousand pounds should I have coolly handed it over to the care of high-class bankers?" I demanded, in some triumph.

Dr. Malchi knitted his brows in thought. "An ordinary man would not," he slowly replied; "but if that speaks true" —with a nod toward the handbill—"you—I beg your pardon —Talbot was no ordinary swindler. Say that he made friends on board ship. Say that one of these friends was a man well

known in English aristocratic circles. He believes whatever story Talbot has told him concerning himself, and he is sufficiently imposed upon to introduce him to his own acquaintances. Under the protection of his friendship he—Talbot—bursts into society, is received everywhere with favour, and his brilliant and audacious move naturally places him beyond suspicion. The detectives who are on the look out for him would not dream of inquiring into the past of the man who poses as the well-known Mr. Lonsdale's friend, as the petted guest of leaders of fashion, and last, but by no means least, as the most favoured of all Miss Narcissa Westmoreland's—the proud daughter of a proud father—admirers. You need not look surprised at me. I, as well as yourself, have discovered somewhat of your past, and from the same or nearly the same, sources of information."

"If what you assert is true," I slowly said, "if by some accursed jugglery you have destroyed my memory——"

"I destroyed it at your own request, remember," interrupted the doctor.

"Can you re-create it?" I asked, heeding not his protest.

"I cannot," and he shook his head decisively. "I can will forgetfulness, but I cannot re-awaken the sleeping memory."

"Sleeping—it is not then utterly destroyed; it may yet be aroused?" I cried, trembling from head to foot with excitement.

"It may; but I have neither the power nor the desire to arouse it," he shortly answered. "You, of all men, ought surely to dread a return of memory, since you know not whether it will not deprive you of freedom—of Regina—of all that, until you met again Narcissa Westmoreland, you prized so dearly."

"Do you not see, man," I exclaimed, in great agitation, "that, in order to enjoy my selfish and ignorant content, I must sacrifice one of the two innocent women who love me, Regina or Narcissa—great heavens, which?"

"Before you take any irrevocable step towards regaining a knowledge of a past which once you so gladly relinquished, read again the police handbill," advised Dr. Malchi, "and try to imagine what your future will be if you are told that you are the man advertised for. Even if you are not, you will

probably find yourself, not many hours after you set your inquiries afloat, incarcerated in a lunatic asylum"—and, with an evident desire to terminate the interview, he pushed away his chair from him.

I took the hint and strode to the door.

"I need no more time for cowardly reflection," I said, ere I turned the handle. "I will, God helping me, yet recover my memory of the past."

"Fool!" sibilated the doctor through his set teeth.

Was I a fool? I somewhat sadly wondered, as, after a second perusal of the handbill in my own chamber, I laid it aside. What if I were indeed identified as the man who had robbed his employers? My mind refused to entertain the idea. I had only the doctor's word that the handbill had ever been in my possession. I would put it out of my thoughts until the next morning, when, as I had mentally determined in the doctor's study, I would go to Colonel Westmoreland and simply and concisely lay before him my terribly strange story. I should, whether he believed it or not, have only done my duty. From his house I would go to Scotland Yard and know beyond doubt——I broke off shudderingly.

My thoughts turned after a little while to Regina. Her pale, reproachful face had haunted me all day. I loved her, and yet—oh, bitter irony of fate!—I loved Narcissa Westmoreland also.

I passed a sleepless night, but arose still strong in my determination to seek Colonel Westmoreland and make a clean breast of my perplexity to him. I did not wait for breakfast. I did not wish to meet either Regina or Dr. Malchi in my feverish unrest of soul and body. But just as I was crossing the hall, a thought—an unpleasantly suggestive thought—struck me. The Scotland Yard authorities would doubtless detain me until they had made the inquiries they deemed necessary. If I were found to be Charles Cartwright Talbot, I might not be allowed to see Regina again. My heart went out with a great longing to her. I could not leave her without one word of farewell.

I tore a leaf out of my pocket-book, and wrote hurriedly on it—"Dr. Malchi will tell you what transpired at our interview last night, and of my determination (irrevocable now) to discover my past. If honour forbids me to see you again,

then—then, Regina, this must be our farewell. You have helped to deceive me, but—God forgive me—I love you yet. —CLIVE."

A soft footfall on the staircase made me look round. Leah, in her neat linen dress and snowy cap, was descending, bearing in her hand a small breakfast tray.

"Will you give this note to Miss Latimer when she awakes, Leah?" I asked.

The woman raised her sombre eyes and looked at me intently, and then, laying down her tray, she wrote, after some perceptible hesitation, a few words on her slate.

I leaned forward as she finished and read:

"I am sorely troubled about my mistress. She is unhappy; she sleeps and eats not. You—you only are to blame."

"My good Leah," I exclaimed, taken considerably aback at her last unexpected assertion. "You do not—cannot—understand."

A sudden light leapt into her eyes. "Trifle not with her love, as you value your own future happiness," wrote back this strange woman, in tremulous characters, across her slate, and then, taking the note from my hand, she went slowly upstairs again.

I looked after her in some bewilderment. Dr. Malchi's household, as well as himself, were truly incomprehensible. He would certainly be deemed by the world a little mad. Regina was of a strangely perplexing and excitable temperament, and now Leah was doing her best to mystify me. I let myself out into the foggy darkness of the early morning, and, with an impatient sigh, dismissed the dumb woman from my thoughts.

The church clocks around me were chiming the half-hour after seven. I could not possibly call upon Colonel Westmoreland before ten o'clock. I must get through as best I could the intervening two hours and a half of weary inaction. I strolled, after a while, into an hotel and ordered breakfast, which I could not have eaten to have saved my life. I drank a cup of coffee and endeavoured to read the morning newspapers, but Regina's face came between me and the printed words, and, too restless to sit still, I wandered aimlessly about the streets until the time at last came when

I was able to present myself before the door of Colonel Westmoreland's residence.

The manservant who opened it showed me at once into the library, where his master was evidently expecting me.

The colonel bowed very frigidly, and after the servant had retired, said, with unwonted stiffness:

"My daughter told me that I might expect a visit from you this morning, Mr. Tempest. Before I say more I had better perhaps hear the explanation I am entitled to demand from you concerning your previous acquaintance with Miss Westmoreland—an acquaintance, I need hardly say, hitherto unsuspected by me."

"I am come to tell you all," I said, very firmly and quietly. "I will not keep anything back from you. You will, at the end of my story, condemn or pity me—I know not which."

Without further preface I commenced my extraordinary confession. I glossed over nothing, I concealed nothing. I tried, as simply as I could, to explain to him the strange thing that had befallen me.

He listened to me with an almost ludicrous expression of amazement on his bluff, good-humoured countenance; but, save for sundry exclamations of astonishment, he heard me to the end without interruption.

"Are you sure—it is an awkward question to ask—but are you sure that you are not just a little touched in your upper story?" he demanded, tapping gently his own forehead.

I smiled sadly enough. "I am not mad; Dr. Malchi can at least testify to my sanity."

"Well, Carrington—Jack Carrington, you know—was darkly hinting to me last night his doubts of your respectability," observed the colonel, staring very fixedly at me; "but I don't think he questioned your possession of all your senses. Am I to understand, then," he added, after another interval of staring, "that—why, great heaven, the very idea is monstrous!—that you have completely lost your memory?"

"Dr. Malchi has lost it for me, rather," I replied, with bitterness of soul.

"Do you mean to tell me," he rejoined, with emphasis,

"that you don't know whether you are an honest man or——"

"A man wanted by the police?" I concluded, with a glance at the police hand bill, which I had a few moments before read aloud to the colonel, and which still lay upon the table.

"God bless my soul!" he gasped. "Does my daughter—does Narcissa—know that you have forgotten who you are, or rather who you were?"

I shook my head. "She knows nothing. Much in my past conduct towards her must have seemed incomprehensible and unaccountable, but she can have no suspicion of its cause."

The colonel thrust his hands into his pockets and knitted his brows in deep cogitation.

"I have heard queer stories before now of Dr. Malchi," he said presently, "but I must confess that this is the very queerest. He is a great authority, folks say, on hypnotism; he must, therefore, have been practising some of his infernal tricks upon you; but stay, you are no better than he is—nay worse, for if this advertisement really concerns you, why, you are a thief, a blackguardly scoundrel, not fit to breathe the same air as an honest man; and—good heavens!—you have had the effrontery, the insolence, to kiss and make love to my innocent girl. By George, man," and his face turned purple with indignation, "if you are as big a rogue as you think you are likely to be discovered to be, why hanging's too good for you!"

I winced at his words, but I could not resent them.

"Let me try and think the matter calmly out," exclaimed the colonel, rumpling his silver hair with his hand. "You've only got Malchi's word that that advertisement was found in your pocket. Perhaps it was, perhaps not—in either case it doesn't follow that you are the man advertised for. If you had been, would you, do you think, have so obligingly placarded yourself with it just for Malchi's edification? Why, my dear fellow, on the face of it the idea is ridiculous."

My heart leaped a little at the colonel's momentary resumption of his old friendliness; but I sadly pointed out to him the condemning initials, the dates, and the large deposit of gold at the bankers.

He heard me to the end, and then shook his head emphatically.

"All coincidences or lies," he oracularly observed. "Why, bless my soul, man, don't you think I know an honest, clean-souled young fellow when I see one? I liked you from the first, and, damn me, I'll shake hands with you just to show that I utterly discredit that fellow Malchi's sinister insinuations!"

Our hands met, and for a moment a strange dimness in my eyes prevented me from seeing the one man who, in spite of terrible odds, still believed in me.

"All right, all right," said the colonel, gripping my hand again before he released it. "I understand you. Now let me get my thoughts into order. First of all, you must neither see nor speak to Narcissa again—that is a *sine qua non*."

My heart sank, notwithstanding I had expected this fiat; but I bowed my head in token of obeying it.

"You cannot play fast and loose with two women," he very gravely observed. "Dr. Malchi has, according to your account, practically sanctioned your engagement to his daughter, or ward, or whatever Miss Latimer is. I therefore forbid you to think of Narcissa any more. She, as well as you, must forget the past."

"I love her," I brokenly pleaded. "I felt her influence even when all old associations had vanished, but——"

"You are now in honour bound to Miss Latimer," grimly concluded the colonel.

"But if that refers to me?" I asked, glancing loathingly at the detested police advertisement.

"If—if me no ifs," he returned. "If you are a runaway swindler, I'll—well, I'll never put faith in the honesty of any man again. Cheer up, man, we will solve that question before we are an hour older. Come along with me to Scotland Yard, and get your mind set at rest."

"But what will Narcissa—Miss Westmoreland—think of me? She must be given some explanation," I haltingly said, rising from my seat.

"I will give her what explanation I deem necessary," decisively replied the colonel. "No, I know what you would ask me, but it cannot be. You and Narcissa are henceforth strangers. Believe me," he added, with unwonted earnestness, "it is better so for both your sakes."

Without another word I followed him into the hall. The

servant in attendance went before us to open the door; but the soft *frou-frou* of silken skirts was heard down the wide staircase, and the next moment Narcissa stood before her father and me.

She looked anxiously at us, and her playful greeting died unuttered on her lips.

I caught her two little hands and held them tightly.

"Good-bye, my love, my love," I passionately ejaculated. "Your father will explain all. Narcissa, forget me, or remember me only in your innocent prayers."

I pressed my lips once, once only, on her imprisoned hands, and then without even a backward glance at the loved face I deemed I had looked my last upon, I turned away, and almost directly afterwards was being driven with Colonel Westmoreland to Scotland Yard.

He did not allude to my brief farewell of Narcissa; he spoke twice or thrice, but each time upon indifferent subjects. In less than half an hour we reached Scotland Yard, and on asking for a few moments' conversation with one of the inspectors, we were ushered into a private room, and into the presence of a tall, slender man, who self-introduced himself to us as Chief Inspector Thorne, and who, with no assumption of curiosity however, waited to be told our errand.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I APPEAL TO REGINA.

THE inspector meditatively tapped his teeth with his pencil. "Talbot, Talbot," he murmured, "robbed his Australian employers of twenty thousand pounds. May I ask, sir," he said, addressing himself to the colonel, "what your object is in making these inquiries?"

The colonel laid his hand warningly on my arm, and frowned me into keeping silence.

"I—at least this gentleman with me," he replied, "is inclined to believe that Talbot was once an acquaintance of

his. If you can therefore furnish my friend with any clue to Talbot's antecedents you will personally oblige me."

The inspector glanced at the card which Colonel Westmoreland handed him, and then his steel-grey eyes scrutinised me curiously.

I wondered, and, strange to say, with a sense of humour, whether the next moment he would lay his hand upon my shoulder, and say, like another Nathan, "Thou art the man!" I met his gaze almost indifferently. I had the last day or two ran the gamut of mental emotions, and for the nonce was reduced to the calmness of despair. I expected I knew not what, and anxiety had almost merged into callousness.

After a moment of silent reflection the inspector rose from his seat.

"Before I can give you any information, sir," he explained "I must consult with the superintendent of my division. He is upstairs; I will see him at once."

He bowed and left the room, carefully closing the door behind him.

"He is already suspicious," I said, turning to the colonel and attempting to smile. "He has gone to get his suspicions confirmed."

"Pooh, pooh," retorted my companion, but with manifest uneasiness.

We did not speak again. I sat almost unconsciously listening to the sullen, monotonous roar of the busy streets around us, and which the silence of the room made distinctly audible. It had commenced to rain on our way to Scotland Yard, and the raindrops were now persistently pattering on the window-panes and obscuring the outside view. Thrice in as many minutes did the colonel look at his watch, and his ruddy face turned almost pale when at last footsteps were heard approaching the door.

Somewhat to my surprise, Inspector Thorne entered the room unaccompanied by the superintendent whom he had presumably gone to consult. He had a small note-book in his hand, and, as he re-seated himself, he ran his finger down one of the pages on which was jotted down a few pencilled memorandums.

"I am glad to say, sir, that my chief has given me

permission to freely answer your questions," he said, speaking to Colonel Westmoreland, but glancing shrewdly at me. "Talbot was arrested yesterday."

"Arrested?" cried the colonel and I in the same breath.

The inspector smiled and nodded. "Yes; we caged our bird yesterday. I could not else, of course, disclose any previously-gained information concerning him. The Australian police---"

"But where is he—are you sure that he is the man?" I asked, making no effort to hide my agitation.

"He is at present at the —— police station, and we are quite certain that he is the man we have been searching for these last six months," blandly replied the inspector.

"Thank God!" I murmured aloud; and "I told you so," cried the colonel emphatically, slapping me on the shoulder.

The puzzled look deepened in the inspector's eyes. To hide it he resorted to his note-book again.

"I can give you full particulars respecting his parentage, previous history, etc., if you still wish me to do so," he announced, rather hesitatingly.

"A thousand thanks, but we will not trespass further on your time and kindness," enthusiastically exclaimed the colonel, rising, as I likewise did. "You have greatly relieved my friend's mind. He—the man at least he took to be Talbot—is still at large; so, of course, it has been a case of mistaken identity all through."

"You are quite convinced of that?" interrogated the police officer. "Our man, remember, was only arrested yesterday morning. Perhaps you have not seen your 'suspect' since?"

"Yes, I have," returned Colonel Westmoreland, laughing boisterously. "I saw him, and spoke to him too, not ten minutes before I entered this room, and had the pleasure of making your acquaintance, Chief Inspector Thorne."

"Ah!" and the inspector clasped his note-book with a regretful click. "You are not, then, at all interested in the real Simon Pure. He is one of the most adroit scoundrels in existence; he is a clever and good-looking enough fellow, not unlike, in general appearance, you, if I may venture the comparison, sir," suddenly addressing himself to me.

I tried to smile carelessly. "Indeed. Going now, colonel?"

"Yes, I'm ready. Come along. Obliged to you all the same, inspector," and the colonel bustled out of the room.

I lingered behind a moment, and pressed a crisp bank-note in the inspector's hand. "I insist. Take it to oblige me. You have removed a terrible load of anxiety from my mind," I hastily ejaculated.

"Glad of it, sir. Well, really, since you will. Pleased at any time, sir," he called after me, "to render you any service that lies in my power."

I gaily nodded back at him, and rejoined the colonel.

"Now, then, what are you going to do next? Punch Malchi's head, eh?" he briskly demanded, directly we got outside.

I laughed. "I have hardly found out the sum total of my indebtedness to Dr. Malchi yet; I would rather settle my account in full."

"Just so, just so," and the colonel nodded his head sagaciously. "Hi! you fellow," hailing a passing hansom. "I'll say good-bye to you now. Shall be glad to hear how you get on. Stop? It won't do to have you coming to my house—not, at all events, whilst Narcissa is there. I'll send her and her aunt into the country next week. The change will do her good, and drive all the nonsense out of her head. You look me up afterwards, will you?"

I gladly promised. I should at least hear of Narcissa; I should know whether she was well and—content.

After the colonel had entered the hansom I wrung his hand with unfeigned gratitude.

"How can I thank you?" I began. "In what way can I——"

"Nonsense, nonsense," he interrupted; "I have done nothing to deserve your thanks."

"Perhaps when Narcissa knows all, she will pity, and even one day forgive me," I very earnestly said, with my hand on the cab door. "I am, as you say, in honour bound to Miss Latimer; but yet—I loved Narcissa first."

"It's of no earthly use going over that subject again," rather impatiently returned the colonel. "She is too young to know the meaning of love yet. She will forget you as

easily as she used to forget her broken play-things. Drive to —— Place, cabby. Good-bye, Tempest."

I stood looking for a moment after the retreating hansom, and then I hailed one on my own account. I must return to Dr. Malchi's and see Regina at once. If she chose to set me free, I would immediately leave his house and take up my abode elsewhere. If she decreed otherwise, then I must be assured, beyond the shadow of a doubt, of her complete ignorance of my true past. I must not only know that the police advertisement had deceived her as well as Dr. Malchi, but I must obtain her promise to help me in the future, in my efforts to regain my lost memory.

It was but little past mid-day when I re-entered the house I had left so early that same morning. Regina was in her own pretty sitting-room, and at the moment of my entrance was leaning back in a low wicker lounging chair with her hands pressed across her eyes, as if she would fain shut out the light of day for ever from them. She did not look up, or show in any way that she was conscious of my approach. I stood gazing down at her for a moment in silence. Her face was pale and wan in the extreme, and a strange pity for her made itself dumbly felt in my heart.

"Regina," I said, softly touching her.

Her hands dropped listlessly into her lap, and she looked at me with a curious intentness.

"Why have you come back?" she asked sadly; "did you not bid me farewell in your note this morning?"

"I have come back because honour and duty demanded my return," I replied.

"Not love?" she interrogated, half-scornfully, half-wistfully.

I was silent for a moment, and then, as concisely as I could, I told her of my visit to Colonel Westmoreland, and of my subsequent interview with the police inspector.

"Dr. Malchi's unflattering theory respecting my past identity turns out to be false, you see," I concluded. "Tell me, Regina, did you, too, credit so shameful an hypothesis?"

She clasped her hands tightly together. "I did not know —I did not care, so long as you loved me. After I found that Narcissa Westmoreland was connected with your forgotten past, I hoped—nay, I did more. I prayed—that it

might be true, in order that you might be effectually separated from her."

"What do you know of my past?" I sternly questioned.

"Very little. I lied when I told you that I knew all concerning it," she returned, almost inaudibly. "Dr. Malchi himself acquainted me with his suspicions after—after you had met again Narcissa Westmoreland."

"Regina, my future, as well as your own, lies in your hands," I said, very gently. "I believe you love me. Will you, in the name of that love, help me to regain my knowledge of the past?"

A sudden tremor shook her slight frame. "How can you make such a proposition to me?" she passionately demanded. "Would you ask a person to pluck out their eyes to gratify your whim? Would you bid a woman throw away her sole life happiness in order to prevent another being called upon to endure a momentary sorrow? Clive, you are not worthy of the love with which I love you."

Her eyes were flashing, and the lost colour had come again into her cheeks. Her bosom heaved with emotion, and she looked every inch a veritable queen. I turned sadly enough away.

"I will, then," I declared, "recover the memory of my past without your help. You have—nay, perhaps you are even now deceiving me; but I forgive you."

The crimson died out of her cheeks, and left them ashen white. Her whole figure suddenly drooped, and as she rose to her feet, she bowed her head until it almost touched her breast.

"I must have time to think," she panted. "Heaven help me, I am the most wretched of women."

The rain beat fiercely against the window, and the ornamental clock on the mantel-shelf ticked with irritating loudness.

"If I could, if it were possible that through me you could regain your former individuality," she said, after a long silence, "would you, do you think, Clive, then love me—love me better than Narcissa Westmoreland."

I seized her hand in mine. "Can you recall it, Regina? For God's sake torture me no longer—say 'Yes' or 'No.'"

"Yes." The brief monosyllable dropped strangely from her lips, but I was in no mood to cavil at tones and phrases.

"If you can—oh, Regina, the very hope renders me almost mad with joy—we will go away together; we will never return to England. I will dedicate my whole life to you. I will (if it be possible," I mentally interpolated), "forget Narcissa Westmoreland and remember you—you only."

"What did Dr. Malchi tell you last night?" she asked, raising her eyes to mine.

I repeated to her almost word for word what he had told me of myself at our last interview.

She heard me patiently to the end. "He has kept back part of the truth from you." She then very quietly said. "He did not tell you that I assisted him in obliterating from your memory all personal recollections——"

I started incredulously.

"Yes, it is true," and she smiled faintly. "I was with him at the lecture-hall; it was part of the duty he has rigorously exacted from me since I became his bond-slave. He had discovered that my will-influence used conjointly with his own was needed to perfect his experiment. His nature was not sympathetic enough to guarantee success, and he immediately guessed the reason of his previous failures. I was quick to grasp his meaning. I was dimly conscious of a latent power within me which I was powerless then to control. In my childhood I had frequently exerted that power. I had secretly willed governesses and school companions to do certain things, and they had unwittingly obeyed me. All such tokens of their submission terrified and yet immeasurably delighted me. I was ambitious, and, in short, Dr. Malchi found in me an apt pupil. He spared no pains to teach me how to cultivate, and yet restrain, this mysterious force, which some people say," and Regina's lip curled slightly, "is of a Satanic origin. I understood what he wished me to do, and for many weeks before that night at the lecture-hall I was prepared to implicitly carry out his directions. On the morning of the day that he was going to give his lecture on hypnotism, he told me that the experiment was to be made that night, but——"

"But, according to his account, I casually strolled into the hall," I interrupted, greatly interested. "How could he tell——"

"He had made your acquaintance before," she replied.

"He—oh, Clive!—I found out afterwards, when it was too late—that he hoped to get control of a large sum of money which was then in your possession. He did not succeed—you had innocently baffled him. Contrary to his expectation, you had already banked it, and he could not touch a sovereign of it without your sanction and signature. But he was not wholly disappointed; he has hinted once or twice to me of valuable Australian property which he hoped to induce you to entirely surrender into his hands, ignorant of its true value and ownership."

"Scoundrel!" I hissed between my set teeth; "I must indeed have been a fool not to have long ago suspected his true character."

Regina looked at me very strangely. "I helped deceive you, Clive," she steadily reminded me. "He and I between us, remember, robbed you of your lost memory. When you," she said, continuing her explanation, "were well under Dr. Malchi's influence, and I was directed to exert over you mine, I felt no kind of compunction for what I was going to do. My soul swelled rather with triumph—if the experiment was successful, who dared say what we might not accomplish in the future? A first faint thrill of pity (mingled with contempt, though) stirred within my heart as I watched you, unconscious of all that was going on around you, assisted into the chamber which Leah had, hours before, prepared for your reception. I do not know what made me do it, but I placed the rose which you had worn in the button-hole of your outer coat beside your bed. It would be, I knew, the one frail link left you of your past. I did not guess that it had been given you by a woman—if I had, I might not then have cared to——"

"Then my own garments were taken away, and new ones substituted?" I interjected inquiringly.

She paused a moment to explain.

"Clothes similar, or nearly so, to what you were wearing were procured and placed ready for you to wear when you awoke. The next day when I met you at dinner," she said, proceeding with her narration, "I, still against my will, pitied you, and you know how rapidly that pity grew into love. I fought against it at first. I tried to make you counteract the influence I had laid upon you, but you failed to under-

stand me. Afterwards it was too late; you loved me—at least, you said you did—and I feared lest old associations re-awakened would prove stronger than the new. I determined that I would not aid you to recover the memory of your forgotten past, if that past was in any way connected with Narcissa Westmoreland. Now you know all, Clive; you can hate or despise me, which you will."

I took her hands, and held them firmly in my own.

"Regina," I exclaimed, "restore again to me the recollection which you once helped to destroy, and we will—forgiving each other, bearing with each other—begin together a new life in a new country."

"But you do not love me," she said, very wistfully. "Nay, you need not answer me, Clive, I know you do not; not at least now, perhaps in the future——"

"Aye, in the future," I repeated, Narcissa's reproachful face rising before me. "I have much to learn again, and much to forget. But, tell me, Regina," I said, rousing myself with an effort, "in what way you can recall my past."

CHAPTER XIX.

LEAH SURPRISES ME.

SHE was silent for a moment or two, and when she replied it was with an evident effort.

"I cannot explain; I may not be successful, but I think I shall. I will try to will you to remember, like I once willed you to forget. If I fail, it will be because you are no longer subject to my influence."

"Shall I first see Dr. Malchi and compel him to reveal all he knows or guesses of me?" I asked, thoughtfully. "He must be cognisant of my past."

"He is not," she said, quickly. "He knows no more of you than any former casual acquaintance of yours might. Beside, you want to remember all the events of your past

life for yourself; you would not be content to be simply told them from the lips of a stranger—were that indeed possible."

"I place myself entirely in your hands, Regina," I eagerly returned. "I will implicitly follow your directions, but if—if your experiment should be successful, then I shall know how to deal with Dr. Malchi after his deserts."

"And if it fails, Clive," she rejoined, with sad tenderness, "you will remember that my love is yours in the future as it has been yours in the past."

"It shall be a crucial experiment, Regina," I said, with an evanescent smile. "If it succeeds, we will, as husband and wife, begin together a new life; if it fails, I will go alone to the uttermost part of the earth. I will never return to England, I will never see you or—or Miss Westmoreland again."

She shook her head. "It will not fail, but——" and she paused abruptly.

"But what?" I asked, curiously.

"I am weary. I did not sleep last night," she dispiritedly asserted. "I will go to my own room——"

"But when and where will you hold your mysterious *séance?*" I interrupted, endeavouring to speak with a cheerfulness I was far from feeling.

"Not this evening," she replied; "he" (there was no need to mention names) "will be home. To-morrow night he gives another lecture on hypnotism, and, strange to say, he gives it in the same hall in which——"

"He practised his devilish arts on me," I savagely surmised.

She pressed her hand for a moment against her heart, as if to still some pain there.

"Clive, I was his accomplice, remember," she pleaded; "I do not know, though, whether you voluntarily craved him to exercise his power upon you, or whether he has lied to you in that also. I did not see you until you were unconscious of your surroundings."

"Do not say any more, Regina," I interrupted, her pale face moving me to sudden pity; "you can, please God, atone for the wrong you did me—we may yet be happy, Regina."

"We cannot both be happy, Clive," she sighed; "your happiness lies in remembering; mine in forgetting. But let me tell you what you are to do to-morrow evening."

Very clearly and succinctly she sketched out for me my proceedings until, and including, the following evening. I was to avoid Dr. Malchi as much as I could, but I was to take care that his suspicions, if by chance he sought my company, were not aroused by anything unusual in my manner. Any suspicions he might previously entertain, Regina promised to do her best to dissipate. In order that he might imagine I shrank from testing the police advertisement, he was to be kept in ignorance of my visit to Scotland Yard. Talbot's arrest would not, I knew, be made public for some days. I might therefore parry any awkward inquiries he might make concerning my future movements. Soon after Dr. Malchi had commenced his lecture, I was to enter the hall by a private door, and, unseen—by him, at all events—patiently await its conclusion, when, so at least Regina assured me, he would immediately leave the platform. He would not, as on the first memorable occasion, invite discussion or argument in semi-privacy. He had promised to preside that same evening at an important scientific meeting held a little way out of London; so there was little fear of him returning to interrupt Regina in any way. As soon as the audience had left the hall, she purposed experimenting upon me in a small room which directly communicated with it. Leah would attend her mistress and be a silent spectator of the strange scene. After my memory was restored—but here Regina's voice for the first time faltered, and I completed the sentence for her with a profound and yet sorrowful exultation.

"I will take you and Leah to an hotel, where you will stay the night. In the morning we will be married, and after I have had a short but momentous interview with Dr. Malchi, we will find the good ship which is to carry us across the seas to our, as yet unknown, Australian home."

Regina looked at me very wistfully, but she did not raise any objection to my rapidly planned-out arrangements.

"I will not see you again until we meet at the lecture-hall," she said, ere she left the room. 'It will be best for us to part until then. I will send Leah to you when I am ready. You will by that time have been taken back to the last scene and associations of your forgotten past, and I shall have succeeded in concentrating my whole will and thought

upon the experiment itself. I must, if it be possible, Clive,'" she added, with a faint smile, "forget the individual and think only of the undertaking."

"Good-bye, then, Regina," I replied; and, bending over her, kissed her on her forehead.

To my surprise, she passionately threw her arms around my neck and drew my head down until my lips rested on hers.

"Good-bye—good-bye for ever, my darling," she murmured. "God grant that you may never know how hard a thing it is that you have asked of me."

She was gone before I could question her concerning the meaning of her strange farewell; and I, conscious of an excitement not wholly unmixed with apprehension, was left alone.

Half an hour later I left the house. I did not wish to run the risk of even a momentary meeting with Dr. Malchi until my personal memory had been restored. But—and at the thought my heart seemed to suddenly stop beating—what if Regina failed to evoke that memory?

It was late at night when I returned to the roof which I inwardly determined—come weal, come woe—should never shelter me another night. I let myself in with my own key, and after ascertaining that Dr. Malchi had a couple of hours previously retired to rest, went at once to my little study to see whether a smoke would tranquillise me sufficiently to hope for a few hours' sleep when at last I sought my bed.

I had hardly been seated ten minutes when I was startled to hear a soft rap at the door.

"Come in," I cried, fully expecting that my midnight visitor would prove to be Dr. Malchi.

The handle of the door turned, and, greatly to my amazement, the deaf and dumb woman Leah entered, and noiselessly closed it behind her.

I looked up at her with some irritation, and remembered for the first time since the morning the singular warning she had written for my benefit across her slate.

"Well, Leah, what do you want?" I asked, curtly enough.

The fingers of her right hand groped towards her slate without, however, touching it, but she did not take her eyes from my face.

"Can't you say—hang it—I mean can't you write what you want?" I asked again, in growing ill-temper.

Her lips quivered as if they had been suddenly struck, but she made no attempt to take the pencil into her clasp.

"Have you gone mad, Leah, or has your master hypnotised you?" I demanded, when the ludicrousness of the situation threatened to overcome its annoyance.

She turned her head and glanced at the door, which was still, of course, securely fastened, and after another quiver of the lips said—*said* to my horror, in a voice which sounded like one from the grave:

"I have warned you, but you heeded me not. Not only this morning, but on the morning after you were brought unconscious into this house, I warned you to beware. You had an enemy. You do not now need to be told his name, but you had a friend. I knew, even before the girl whom you have since professed to love herself did, that she regarded you with interest neither common nor evanescent. I have come now to pray to you—to entreat you—not to wreck a life which is dearer, far, far dearer to me than my own."

As the sound of her strange, reed-like voice died away, I recovered a little from the amazement with which I had listened to it—listened to it, too, more than I had to her actual words.

"I must confess that you have astonished me, Leah," I said. "I suppose you have a right to possess secrets, but I certainly did not deem you capable of such gross deceit as you must have practised upon your master and young mistress."

"Master!"—she repeated, the word with an unutterable loathing. "He is indeed my master, but he is my husband, and the father of my only child—Regina."

I stared at her with increasing bewilderment. Surely the woman had suddenly taken leave of her senses.

"I have not come to talk of myself," she said, speaking very slowly and laboriously. "I have come to wrestle with you for Regina's happiness. She loves you, and you are breaking her heart."

"Leah—Mrs. Malchi, though, I suppose I ought to call you—if your extraordinary assertion is true," I began, in sore perplexity, "you are hardly misjudging me. I know

not, of course, how much, or how little, you know of my present relations with Regina, but before this time to-morrow night we two shall be man and wife."

"You say so. Bah!" and a faint flush tinged the woman's white cheeks. "Think you that if Regina would wed you without your love being hers that she would be happy? She would be intensely miserable. She would kill herself with her own hand rather than endure the wretchedness of her life. You would hate her for once destroying your memory, but you would hate her more for restoring it, and herself being the barrier which must effectually separate you from it."

"Then you want me, for her sake, to refuse to allow the experiment which has become so mysteriously known to you?" I asked slowly.

Leah—as I must throughout this interview continue to call her—nervously interlaced her thin fingers.

"I want you," she said, in reply, "to think of her—of her joyless childhood, of her loveless youth; she who knows not that she has either father or mother. Oh! you cannot be cruel enough to wilfully destroy the happiness which might be hers in the future."

I was silent.

"Do you want to know anything of myself?" she presently asked, her voice still maintaining its unnaturalness. "I will tell you enough to show that I merit only your compassion, but if you are willing to forego your knowledge of your past, I will go away; neither you nor Regina shall see nor hear of me again. I shall be content, aye, immeasurably content, to know that she is happy."

I tried to speak, but she said, very pleadingly:

"Wait a moment. Let me tell you how I, a young and very ignorant girl, after being, as I believed, lawfully married to Dr. Malchi, gave birth to my little innocent child. How soon afterwards he (falsely, as I was afterwards to find out) asserted that the marriage was illegal. He declared that at the time of the ceremony he was divorced from his first wife, and that he married me before the decree was made absolute; therefore, in the sight of the law, he was still free, and I and my child objects for the finger of scorn to point at. Maddened by his lies, I left his roof, and desperately tried to drown myself and my baby-girl. I was picked up by some barge-

men, but lay ill in a hospital for many months, knowing nothing—caring nothing—for my surroundings. When at last I recovered sufficiently to leave the institution, I went out again into the world an unsuspected, but none the less conscience-stricken, woman, who had, as, of course, I supposed, foully murdered her own babe. Dr. Malchi had left England. He and I did not meet for many years, but one day we were brought face to face again. After he had cruelly played upon my hopes and fears, he gave me to understand that my child, as well as myself, had been rescued from the cold, dark river, but although I fell at his feet and besought him to tell me all he knew of her, he refused until long afterwards, when he sent for me to come to him, and said that if I would swear never by act, or word, to reveal the relationship existing between us, that then he would, under the pretence of her being his ward, or adopted daughter, make her the mistress of his home and allow me to be daily in her presence. If I refused to take the oath he demanded, he would go away and I should never see him or my child again. Do you wonder what my answer was? I gladly, gratefully swore not only to be dumb in her presence, but to never, under any circumstances, behave to her other than would an ordinary household servant. She has not to this day any suspicion of the truth. To you, you only, have I divulged it. Say that I have not divulged it in vain. Say that you will not, for her sake, for the sake of what I have told you, seek to disinter the memory of a past which will separate you from her. Answer me, I beseech you."

CHAPTER XX.

MY SECOND AWAKENING.

I WAS silent for a moment as I turned over in my mind my best and kindliest way of announcing to her my decision.

"You have my sincerest sympathy, my heartiest respect," I said, very earnestly; "but"—and I looked straight into her eyes—"I cannot grant your request. If Regina can

restore again to me my forgotten identity, I will, I must gratefully accept it from her. She, as you said just now, helped destroy it. Is it therefore not right and just that she should strive to re-create it? If I were to marry her to-morrow in ignorance of my past, I should be of all men the most wretched. Might not dark shadows from it menace the future of innocent children? Dare I entail upon others responsibilities which I myself refuse to claim? No; my mind is fully made up. Come what will, I get back to-morrow evening (if it be indeed possible) my lost memory."

Leah suddenly bowed her head, whether in despair or resignation, I knew not.

"I will, then, say no more," she murmured, brokenly. "You will keep my secret?"

"I will," I promised, readily. "Believe me, Leah," I added, with a sigh, "my determination ensures Regina's future happiness as well as my own contentment."

She pressed her lips tightly together, as if already repenting the disclosure of her secret.

"Try," she said, ere she quitted the room, "to forget on this the last night of your strange experience my useless revelation. To-morrow and afterwards I must be to you the dumb woman Leah again."

"Forget!" I repeated, with grim humour, as the door closed behind her. "I am tired of forgetting; I want to remember for the future."

* * * * * *

A small crowd of people were gathered around the entrance of the hall in which Dr. Malchi was giving his lecture on hypnotism. I made my way past them and knocked at a door which Regina had previously told me communicated with the private portion of the hall. The attendant who opened it had evidently been apprised of my expected arrival, for, after a brief question and answer, he led me through a long corridor towards what I rightly guessed to be the platform of the building. He paused before a green-baize door, and in a low voice explained to me that I could leave the hall either by the corridor through which we had come, or, by unlocking the baize door, I could pass out by way of the hall itself.

After a moment or two he went away, and I, unfastening

the door, and opening it a little way, was enabled to clearly hear the concluding portion of Dr. Malchi's lecture without either the speaker or the audience observing me. The hall was separated from me by a narrow stone passage, but through one of its open doors I could see the occupants of the foremost seats, and catch an occasional glimpse of Dr. Malchi. Regina, so far as I could ascertain, was nowhere visible. The doctor was discoursing glibly enough upon the medical use of hypnotism, and citing cases in which it had successfully superseded chloroform, but he did not go nearly as deeply into the subject as I had, somehow or other, anticipated he would. Once or twice he glanced at his watch, and directly he had concluded his lecture he left the platform, and a moment later I saw him cross the hall in the wake of his departing audience.

As I waited for Leah—or rather Mrs. Malchi—to conduct me to Regina, I strove, as far as I was able, to curb my rising excitement. Would the coming momentous experiment succeed or fail? A passionate prayer arose from my heart. . . . "Oh, my God, suffer it not to fail!" . . .

A light footfall presently sounded behind me, and I, turning eagerly, confronted Leah. She beckoned to me, and, obeying her unspoken direction, I followed her across the already darkened platform, and into the small adjoining room, in which Regina, deadly pale, but otherwise quite calm, was awaiting me. She welcomed me with a smile, but did not speak. Leah, whose face was as drawn and anxious as I felt my own to be, placed herself a little way behind her mistress, and, despite my own overweening agitation, I found time to glance compassionately at her.

"Do not speak," directed Regina, in her clear, low voice, as she motioned me to seat myself. "Try, as far as you can, to will yourself to remember your forgotten past."

As I tried to obey her, she whispered something to Leah, and the latter immediately brought her her violin. Standing near me, Regina swept her fingers over its strings, and commenced playing the strange, weird melody which she had once before evoked from the same instrument. I listened to it with even greater emotion than I had then experienced. But as the last note died away, a delicious languor took possession of me. What mattered past or future, I lazily

thought, as, leaning back in my chair, I gazed straight into Regina's eyes? Was not the present—the satisfying present—enough for any man? Why look backward, or why seek to look beyond?

Suddenly I felt, rather than saw, Regina approach me She lightly pressed her hands once, twice, thrice upon my brow. I had only time to wonder if I was losing consciousness before a great black gulf of nothingness yawned open all around me, and, little by little, swallowed me up.

* * * * *

Before I unclosed my eyes, I sleepily reviewed my past life. How long had I been in England? Hardly three months, and yet how much had happened in that short space of time. I had not two short months ago guessed even of the existence of Narcissa Westmoreland, and now—— But stay; what could be the painful memory associated with that name? Had I not kissed her yielding lips, and told her that I loved her, only a few short hours ago; and had she not, in sweet, shy answer, taken a rose from her bosom and put it into my hand as a token of her acceptance of that love? Why should I feel aught but joy and blissful gratitude? I must, without any delay, see Colonel Westmoreland, and pray him to give me Narcissa. He could not, I thought, object to me on the score of either family or worldly position. My late father, Gabriel Tempest, was the sole surviving representative of a good old English family. My mother, who had died when I was born, was the only child and heiress of Sir Hugh Culverwell, a well-known and highly respected Scotch baronet. After the death of my father, which event occurred before I had attained my majority, I had sojourned for several years in Australia. I was interested in that country, and had recently become a landowner in it to no small extent. I had been studying agriculture, and had, greatly to my disgust, managed to overwork myself into a tedious illness, which the doctors dubbed by a long name, and declared that only a sea voyage would wholly cure. Strangely enough, my late father had left instructions in his will for a large sum of money—twenty thousand pounds—to be paid in gold to me, or my representative, in his London solicitor's office, on my five-and-twentieth birthday. As that anniversary was then barely

four months distant, I resolved to try the doctor's prescription and fetch my money in person. I accordingly set sail for England as soon as I conveniently could. On the voyage I contracted what promised to be more than a transient friendship with a fellow passenger, named Kenneth Ambrose Lonsdale. We were both going to England to claim a fortune; but he, unlike myself, had no intention of returning to definitely settle in Australia. He was well known in London society. He had, since his boyhood, lived with his uncle, Mr. Ambrose Lonsdale, of Surrey, and he had only been paying a flying visit to his father, in Australia, when his uncle's death occurred, and he was recalled to England as the sole inheritor of his wealth. Poor old Lonsdale! what would he say, I wondered, the train of my meditations abruptly broken, when he was told that his jestingly uttered prophecy that an English bride would reign over my Australian home was destined in all probability to be a true one? He had accepted the invitation his new friend Windsor had given him for the shooting and hunting season; therefore by the time he returned to London I should have seen Colonel Westmoreland, and all would be settled. Perhaps he would follow my example. Miss Pauline Leslie, albeit a trifle shallow, would make him a bright, attractive wife; Narcissa liked her, I knew, but the magical name of Narcissa banished all reflections not immediately connected with her. She was going to leave London on the morrow. Her father had arrived from India sooner than he had expected, and he had written to her from his country seat in Devonshire desiring her to join him there as soon as her town engagements would permit. I had received a good-natured hint from Lady Caple, and, promptly acting upon it, I had left my hotel and sent my luggage to the cloak-room at Paddington on purpose to be ready to accompany Narcissa (if not in the same carriage, in the same train) into Devonshire. I could not remain in London after she had departed from it. Perhaps Colonel Westmoreland would invite me to stay at Westmoreland Hall; if he did not, I could easily find lodgings in the adjacent village. If he gave his consent to our engagement, he would doubtless give his consent to our speedy marriage. I had only temporarily banked the twenty thousand pounds I had received from my father's solicitor. Perhaps Colonel Westmoreland would allow me to

make it over to Narcissa in lieu of tedious marriage settlements. I should count the hours until I could know my fate. By-the-bye, what had I done with myself after I had parted with Narcissa on the previous evening? Ah! I remembered I had carelessly strolled into the lecture-hall in —— street. Dr. Malchi, a man of somewhat extraordinary appearance and character, to whom Lonsdale had previously introduced me, was giving a lecture on hypnotism. I had listened incredulously enongh to his attempted explanation of will suggestion, and his personal manifestation of it had only slightly shaken my scepticism. He had, after the lecture, vouchsafed to enter into conversation with me. He had led me aside, and talked a lot of nonsense about being able to efface from the mind all personal recollections and associations. I had laughed in his face at what I believed to be a madman's boast, and dared him to test his vaunted assertion upon myself. Had he done so? Good heavens! what a terrible flood of memories was suddenly let loose upon me! I opened my eyes, and raised myself on my elbow. Where was I? What had happened?

I saw a small but brilliantly lighted room. In the chair opposite me was a girl partially supported in the arms of a woman who had no eyes or thought save for her burden. Another second and I had remembered all.

"Regina, the experiment has been successful," I cried, trying to force myself to speak joyfully.

There was no answer. Neither the woman nor the girl stirred.

"Regina," I cried again. "Why do you not look at me? Why do you not speak to me?"

"She neither sees nor hears you," answered the woman, lifting her strange eyes to mine. 'She is dead."

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

I SPRANG to my feet. "Woman, you are jesting," I hoarsely exclaimed; and, bending over Regina, I took her passive hands in mine, and tenderly chafed them. "She has only fainted—it can be nothing worse. Run for a doctor, or stay, I will fetch one whilst you remain with her."

The woman made no reply. She tightened her hold of Regina, and stooped low enough over her for her face to rest upon hers.

At head-long speed I made my way out of the hall, and, springing into a hansom, told the man to drive me to the nearest doctor's residence. In less than ten minutes I returned, bringing the doctor with me. The position of neither women had changed in the least during my absence. The doctor, waving Leah aside, bent over Regina, and, taking a stethoscope from his pocket, he placed it close to her heart, and for some seconds, during which I dared not breathe, he listened intently at it.

"She is dead, sir. Neither I nor any other doctor can do aught for her," he said, turning to me as he re-pocketed his stethoscope.

I staggered back a few paces.

"She could not have suffered at all," he presently very sympathetically observed. "Her death is evidently due to sudden failure of the heart's action, caused, I should say, by recent mental excitement of some kind; but, doubtless you or"—and he looked hesitatingly at Leah, who had crept back again to her old position—"her maid can tell me if my surmise is likely to be a correct one?"

"She has lately been practically interesting herself in hypnotism," I replied, my trembling lips almost refusing to frame the words.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah! just so. Her heart doubtless has been weak for some time. Any strong excitement would at once——"

I covered my face with my hands and groaned aloud. I—I alone— had killed her.

"By-the-bye, is she not the daughter or the niece of the man who has been giving the lecture here this evening?" asked the doctor, after contemplating the beautiful dead girl for some moments in silence.

I waited a moment to give Leah the opportunity of disclosing, if she wished to, her secret; but as she remained silent, I said, evasively, "She—she was his ward."

"Ah! poor girl. Malchi, according to report, is a man—well, the least said of him the better, maybe——"

"If Miss Latimer had lived she would have been my wife to-morrow morning," I said, checking the doctor's gossipping propensities at the outset.

"Indeed, indeed. Well, I cannot do anything. There must, of course, be an inquest," he said, making an entry in his pocket-book. "You know my name and address, I think? You had better have the corpse"—I shuddered suddenly from head to foot—"removed at once."

"Let her stay here to-night," unexpectedly interposed Leah, looking across at me with eager, beseeching eyes; "I can do all that is—necessary. Let me watch beside her until morning."

I glanced hesitatingly at her, and then at the doctor. He nodded his head in answer to my unspoken question.

'Yes, better so, perhaps. Will you, or shall I," he added looking at his watch, "acquaint Dr. Malchi with this sad event?"

"I will," I said, brokenly.

"Very well. Would you like me to send you someone to assist you, or stay with you, my good woman?" he said, speaking to Leah.

"No; I want to be alone with her," she replied, very firmly and quietly.

"I will arrange all the necessary preliminaries of the inquest," he said, as he preceded me to the door of the hall. "I am very sorry for you. By the way, what a strange woman her maid appears to be!"

"She loved her mistress," I shortly replied; and then, after a brief word of thanks, I closed the door after him, and hurriedly returned to the room in which lay the woman who had loved me so well, and who I——

Leah had drawn the dead girl's head down to her bosom, and, when I entered the room, she was cradling it with fond words and kisses.

"My little child, my little child," she was saying, with hard, tearless eyes, over and over again, "I lost you in life, but I have found you in death."

I took Regina's cold hands in mine, and, kneeling before her, I pressed passionately remorseful kisses upon them.

"Leah, I killed her. For God's sake say something to comfort me," I cried, appealingly.

"She was not sorry to die," was the strange woman's strange reply. "Knowing as she did that your love had been given to another woman (I am not blaming you; you could not help yourself), she did not want to live. She died rejoicing in the consciousness that the sacrifice of her life had secured your future happiness."

I rose to my feet and looked long and tenderly on the calm and beautiful upturned face.

"Regina, forgive me," I murmured, kissing again and again the silent lips around which a sad smile yet lingered; "forgive me and wait for me. I will come to you."

Presently, as I turned to leave the room to go in search of Dr. Malchi, I said:

"I will return very soon. You and I, Leah, will keep watch beside her to-night."

"No," and she suddenly thrust out her hands as if to forcibly keep me away; "I will stay alone with her. She is my child, remember. Your love for her is not worthy to be compared with mine. Leave us together—death has broken down all barriers."

"But," I hesitatingly commenced.

"Go, I beseech you," she cried. "It is my right to be alone with her, and I claim it."

I could say nothing more. After a yearning backward glance, I left mother and child so strangely disunited in life, so strangely united in death, alone.

* * * * * * *

For the last time I stood facing Dr. Malchi in his study.

Neither of us had spoken for some moments. The soft lamplight shone full on his singular countenance. A strange smile presently parted his lips, and he boldly met and returned my gaze.

"Then we part to-night for good?" he said, questioningly.

"Aye," I returned. "We met for evil, but surely the evil has recoiled on your own head. If you had not cruelly tortured me, Regina would not be lying dead to-night."

He tried to shrug his shoulders in his old way.

"You go your way, and I'll go mine," he said, with an affectation of carelessness; "but the world has not heard the last of my splendidly successful experiment."

I looked at him in disgust. "If you value your liberty, do not, then, experiment either in England or Australia," I said. "I shall not forget you, I give you fair warning, only for Regina's sake, and for the sake of another woman"—he looked sharply at me—"do I suffer you to escape unpunished."

"What could you prove, you fool?" he hissed. "I would, if it pleased me, defy you to do your worst."

"Say no more," I cried, with hardly repressed anger. "We part to-night never, I pray Heaven, to meet again."

"Amen," he responded, mockingly.

* * * * * * *

Narcissa is beside me as I write these few concluding lines. She is sitting in her low easy chair, and opposite her is Mrs. Carrington *née* Miss Pauline Leslie, who has just dropped in to share my wife's five-o'clock tea. Lieutenant Carrington has long ago forgiven me for knocking him down, and he and I are now the staunchest of friends. Out on the grass in front of the French window is a grave and somewhat sad-looking woman, who smiles only when our baby-girl, Regina, caresses or prattles to her self-appointed nurse. She is leading the little one now by the hand, and I smile to myself as I watch the rare gleam of happiness come into the eyes which are bent upon the child. Narcissa, who, by-the-bye, cannot be tempted to forsake England for Australia, has long ago been told the story of my past terrible experience, and she, as well as I, speak often and tenderly of the dead girl to whom we owe our present happiness. . . . Some-

times I wander out alone at night, and as I gaze into the starlit skies, I wonder if Regina knows how lovingly her dear memory is, and ever will be, enshrined in my heart. My dead love, shall we, I vainly speculate, ever meet again? If we do, will she utter then the words of forgiveness which I am longing to hear? *Quien sabe?*

THE END.

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The Queen.